THE LIVES OF THE TWELVE

A Look at the Social and Political Lives of the Twelve Infallible Imams (ʿa)

Written By
Shaykh Mahdī Pīshvā'ī

▪PART FOUR▪

A Look at the Lives of Imam Hadi (ʿa), Imam Askari (ʿa), and Imam Mahdi (ʿa)

Translated By
Sayyid Ali Musawi

The Lives of the Twelve is a pioneering work that details the lives of the Twelve Shia Imams. While most works on the Twelve Imams focuses on the basics of their lives, this text goes into the details of their social and political lives and how they affected change throughout their societies. Through extensive research, Shaykh Mahdi Pishvai has been able to craft together many details which were not widely known before. This is the first time a book of this caliber has been published in the English language. Today, we live in times where morality and a sense of right and wrong have all but disappeared. In light of this, we can turn to the teachings and wisdom of the Twelve in order to see how we can help bring back morality and that human sense of differentiating between right and wrong in our society. This work is composed of four distinct volumes each of which goes into the lives of three of the Twelve Imams.

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The Lives of the Twelve

(Part Four)

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Written By: Shaykh Mahdī Pīshvā'ī

Translated By: Sayyid Ali Musawi

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Preface and Acknowledgments

-By Sayyid Ali Musawi

In the name of God, the All-Beneficent, the Ever Merciful

The existing biographical works on the lives of the Twelve Imams ('a) tend to be strictly narrative in nature, and do not deal with the social or political aspects of their lives. This book, by contrast, in addition to narrating the biographies of the Imams, goes into the details of how they worked to spread the true teachings of Islam in their respective societies. Indeed, we are indebted to these Twelve Guides; without their teachings and guidance, we would have been plunged into the depths of darkness.

Although this book began as a project many years ago, it has finally reached completion today, April 25, 2019. We thank God for his blessings, which weigh heavy on us, and we ask that he guides us on his path and that he allows us to be more perfect in serving him. Truly, nothing is possible except through God.

I would like to extend my gratitude and thanks to my parents, who have been integral in teaching and guiding me throughout all of my years. I would also like to thank everyone who has been a part of this journey thus far, particularly my teachers in the religious seminary of Qum,

Iran. My time there proved invaluable in forging me into the person I am today, and I would not trade those years for anything in this world. I would also like to thank the members of the Noor Collective in San Diego, California for creating the platform which inspired this publication. Finally, I would like to thank Issa D. for his help in the final round of editing this manuscript, as well as Haider al-Shaher for his work on the cover page. May we all be worthy one day to call ourselves the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a)...

Sayyid Ali Musawi
April 25, 2019
San Diego, California

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The Tenth Imam

Imam ʿAlī al-Hādī

A Brief Look at the Life of Imam Hādī

Imam ʿAlī al-Hādī (ʿa) is the tenth of the twelve leaders of the Shia world. He was born in the middle of the month of Dhul Ḥijjah, in the year 212 Hijrī. His place of birth is an area called Ṣarīya,[1] located on the outskirts of Medina. His father is the Ninth Imam, Imam Jawād (ʿa), and his honorable mother was a virtuous and pious woman by the name of Samānah.[2] Naqī and Hādī are some the more famous titles of the Tenth Imam, and he is also known as Abū al-Ḥasan the Third (Thālīth).[3] Imam Hādī (ʿa) succeeded the imamate in the year 220 Hijrī, after the martyrdom of his father, when he was only eight years old. The period of his imamate lasted thirty three years, and he lived until 254 Hijrī, before being martyred at the age of 41 in the city of Sāmarrā, Iraq.

Caliphs who Lived during the Time of Imam Hādi

Imam Hādī (ʿa) lived during the time of several ʿAbbāsid caliphs during the period of his imamate. These caliphs were:

1- Muʿtaṣim, the brother of Maʾmūn (217-227)
2- Wāthiq, the son of Muʿtaṣim (227-232)
3- Mutawakil, the brother of Wāthiq (232-248)
4- Muntaṣir, the son of Mutawakil (6 months)
5- Mustaʿīn, the son of Muntaṣir's uncle (248-252)
6- Muʿtazz, the other son of Mutawakil (252-255)

Imam Hādī (ʿa) was poisoned under the last caliph. He

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[1] Ṭabarsī, ʿIlām al-Warā Biʿilām al-Hūdā, Third Edition, Tehran, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, p. 355.
- Shaykh Mufīd, al-ʾIrshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 327.

[2] Ṭabarsī, ʿIlām al-Warā Biʿilām al-Hūdā, Third Edition, Tehran, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, p. 355.
- Shaykh Mufīd, al-ʾIrshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 327.

[3] Ṭabarsī, ʿIlām al-Warā Biʿilām al-Hūdā, Third Edition, Tehran, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, p. 355. According to the Shia narrators, Abū al-Ḥasan the first was Imam Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar (a), and Abū al-Ḥasan the second was the 8th Imam (a).

was martyred and buried in his own house.

Political and Social Conditions during the Life of the Imam

This particular period of time in the ʿAbbāsid caliphate has certain characteristics which sets it apart from other periods. These particularities include:

1- The decline of the power of the caliphate: The caliphate, whether under the Umayyads or under the ʿAbbāsids, possessed a great deal of power and prestige. However, Imam ʿAlī al-Hādī's era saw the gradual dissipation of this power due to the influence of the Turks, as well as various slave groups over the government. The government fell into the hands of certain parties, and the position of the caliphate became more of a ceremonial one, rather than a position of supreme power and command. At the same time, it must be noted that if any danger ever presented itself, the caliphs, their supporters, and the functionaries of the government all rallied behind one another to suppress that danger.

2- The self-indulgence of the court officials: The ʿAbbāsid caliphs of this period spent most of their time engaged in parties, wine drinking, and other forms of pleasure-seeking. The palace was fully immersed in corruption and sin. The pages of history have recorded in detail what transpired in these parties.

3- The prevalence of oppression and injustice: Oppression, tyranny, and the continuous plunder of the public treasury caused people's mass discontent towards their rulers.

4- The spread of Alawī movements: During this time, the ʿAbbāsid government sought to create enmity against the Alawīs in the wider society. Through such means, they wanted to weaken the power of the Alawīs and neutralize their ability to revolt against the rulers. Whenever the government felt the smallest threat from the Alawīs, it would initiate a disproportionate and merciless response.

The reason behind the severity of their actions was that the 'Abbāsids felt their government to be weak and fragile, in spite of their tight control over the society. It was for this reason that they feared these Alawī movements to such a degree.

During this time, the Alawīs invited the people under the leadership of a "Selected Individual from the Family of Muḥammad," deliberately not naming any single individual to the leadership position of their movement. The reason for this was that the leaders of the movement knew that their Imams ('a) were somewhere in the fortress city of Sāmara'. They were carefully being watched and thus, naming any of them to this position would certainly result in their murder. These movements were a reaction to the widespread oppression and tyranny which hovered over the Muslim society, and they had a direct relationship to the amount of pressure exerted over the people by the caliphs. For example, under Muntaṣir's rule, there were no revolts. This was because Muntaṣir was inclined to a certain degree towards the family of the Prophet, and so, he did not persecute the Shias too greatly during his rule. Yet history has recorded 18 revolts from the year 219 until 270 Hijrī. These revolts were all suppressed and defeated by the 'Abbāsid government.

The Reason behind the Defeats

The reason behind the defeats of these various revolts can, on the one hand, be argued to have been caused by weak leadership, while on the other hand, it can be argued that it was caused by weaknesses in the supporters of these movements as well. Virtually all of the leaders of these revolts lacked a correct and complete program of action and therefore, disorganization and chaos appeared in their movements. From yet another perspective, their revolts could not be justified as one hundred percent Islamic in orientation. Due to this reason, they were not sanctioned

by the respective Imams of their time.

Of course, it must be mentioned that a segment of the people who participated in these revolts were sincere and true Shias, who fought to the death for their Islamic ideals. At the same time, it has to be understood that these individuals were usually very small in number, and the majority of the rebels were people who did not possess clear Islamic goals. They would simply rise up as a reaction against the oppression and tyranny that had been inflicted upon them, and so their primary goal was to just improve their immediate situation. When these individuals felt the first indications of defeat or impending death, they would quickly disperse, causing the movement to fall apart.

As mentioned before, most of these revolts were not given sanction by the Imams (ʿa). This was either due to issues with their leaders, or because the movements did not have Islamic aims in mind, or due to various other problems related to their organization. Sometimes, their plans and policies were so ineffectual that it was obvious that they were going to be defeated. If the Imams (ʿa) had openly sanctioned these revolts, and they were in turn defeated, the very foundation of the Shia movement would have been exposed to grave danger.

The Secret Activities of the Imam

As the timeline of the ʿAbbāsid caliphs shows, Mutawakil ruled for the longest period of time during the imamate of Imam Hādī (ʿa). For this reason, it is important for us to take a brief look at Mutawakil's policies towards the Imam and his followers. When we look at Mutawakil's rule, we find that he treated the Hāshimīs with a high degree of harshness and oppression. He was very suspicious of them and would go to great lengths to vilify them in the eyes of the people. His vizier, ʿUbaydullah ibn Yaḥyā ibn Khāqān, would always speak ill of the Hāshimīs in front of Mutawakil, and incite the caliph to persecute them. In

regards to the Alawīs, Mutawakil was the most severe of the 'Abbāsid caliphs during the time of the Imam.[4] It has been noted that Mutawakil had a strange hatred and animosity for Imam 'Alī ('a) and his descendants. If he ever learned that someone was inclined towards them, he would quickly seize their wealth and have them executed.[5]

It was due to these considerations that Imam Hādī ('a) was careful to conceal whatever activities he was engaged in. Whenever he would interact with his followers, he was careful to uphold the highest degree of secrecy and discretion. Evidence of this is found in an incident that historians have narrated-

Muḥammad ibn Sharaf has narrated: "I was walking with Imam Hādī ('a) in the city of Medina. The Imam ('a) said: 'Are you not the son of Sharaf?' I answered in the affirmative. At that point, I wanted to ask the Imam a question, when he said to me: 'Right now we are passing through this (busy) road; this area is not suitable for asking questions.'"[6] This shows the severity of the conditions which prevailed in the society and the degree of the Imam's ('a) secrecy and caution.

Having no other choice, Imam Hādī ('a) would show the same degree of discretion in his relations with the Shia. This was true whether they lived in far off regions, or whether they lived close by. In addition, he would collect money, gifts, and charitable dedications[7] with the same level of secrecy and caution. An example of this has been narrated in the books of history: Muḥammad ibn Dāwūd

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[4] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Maqātil al-Ṭālibīīn, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 395.
- Imam Hādī (a), The Islamic Organization of Information, The Office of Translations and Compilations, 1368 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 67.

[5] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 7, p. 55.

[6] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 176.
- 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 175.

[7] Nudhūr

Qummī and Muḥammad Ṭalḥī have narrated: "We were transporting money and other valuables from Qum (and its nearby areas), which included khūms, charitable dedications, gifts, and jewels for Imam Abū al-Ḥasan Hādī (ʿa). Along the way, a message from the Imam reached us and informed us that we should return, for the situation was not suitable for the delivery of this wealth.

We returned, and we kept what was in our possession until some time after, when the Imam (ʿa) ordered that the wealth be loaded on some camels that he had sent. He ordered that the camels be sent towards him without a driver to lead them. We loaded the camels and sent them on their way. After some time, we went to visit the Imam (ʿa). It was then that he said to us: 'Here is the wealth that you had sent.' We saw that the wealth was hidden in the house of the Imam in the same condition we had sent it in."[8] Although it is not clear whether this incident took place when the Imam (ʿa) was living in Medina or while he was in Sāmarrā' (where the severity of control was much greater), in either case, it is a clear example of the Imam's utmost secrecy in his dealings.

The Imam's Representatives

The restrictive conditions which the Imams (ʿa) lived in during the time of the ʿAbbāsid caliphate caused them to find new methods of maintaining connections with their followers. One such method involved the selection of representatives and deputies throughout the Muslim world and their organization into a tightly knit network through which they could maintain connections with their followers. One goal of this network was the collection of Khūms, Zakāt, charity, and gifts which were sent from various regions of the Muslim world. This economic network was vital to the survival of the Shia movement. In

[8] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 175.

addition to this, these representatives were instrumental in relaying questions related to various jurisprudential and ideological issues the Shias wished to ask the Imams. The Imams would answer these questions and their answers would in turn be sent back. This organization proved to be exceedingly effective in creating a hierarchy through which wealth was spread in strategic ways and the ideological basis of the Shias was strengthened.

Imam Hādī (ʿa) lived in a condition of severe restrictions in the city of Sāmarrā'. In spite of this, he continued the selection of the representatives; this was a policy which his father, Imam Jawād (ʿa), had first enacted. The absence of direct contact between the Imam (ʿa) and his followers enhanced the religio-political aspect of the deputies, and they took on an even higher level of responsibility. The deputies of the Imam (ʿa) gradually gained valuable experience in organizing the affairs of the Shias. Numerous pieces of historical evidence shows that the deputies had defined Shias as belonging to one of four different districts, according to where they lived within the Muslim world.

The first region included Baghdad, Madā'in, and Iraq (Kūfah). The second region contained Baṣrah and Ahwāz. The third contained Qum and Ḥamidān, while the fourth contained the Ḥijāz, Yemen, and Egypt. Each region was the responsibility of an independent deputy who would in turn select and supervise various local deputies. The duties of this group of representatives is evident from the commands of Imam Hādī (ʿa). It has been narrated that Imam Hādī (ʿa) once wrote a letter to his local deputy (in Baghdad), ʿAlī ibn Balāl. In it, he instructed: "...I have selected Abū ʿAlī (Ibn Rashīd) to replace ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd Rabih.[9] I have entrusted this duty to him for he

[9] ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd Rabih passed away in the year 229 in the city of Mecca and Imam Hādī (a) appointed Abū ʿAlī in his place. (Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Maʿrifat al-Rijāl (Popularly known as Rijāl Kashshī), researched by: Ḥasan Muṣṭafāwi,

possesses the necessary qualifications, and no one has precedence over him (i.e. there is no one better suited for this position). I know that you are the leader of your area, and so I wished to make you aware of this matter through a separate letter. Nevertheless, it is necessary that you follow him and entrust him with the money that has been collected. Encourage our other followers in this matter and inform them that they are to assist him, so that he may perform his duties..."[10]

In another letter, Imam Hādī ('a) wrote to his deputies in Baghdad, Madā'in, and Kūfah, saying: "Oh Ayūb ibn Nūḥ, as a result of this order, refrain from hindering Abū 'Alī. You are both charged with acting upon your duties in your specific areas. In this case, you can perform your duties without resorting to my consultation. Oh Ayūb, in the basis of this order, do not accept anything from the people of Baghdad and Madā'in, **and do not give any of them permission to contact me.** If anyone brings you money from outside of your area of responsibility, instruct him to send it to the deputy of his area. Oh Abū 'Alī! I also instruct you to enact exactly what I ordered Abū Ayūb to do."[11]

The Imam ('a) also sent a letter to his followers in Baghdad and Madā'in, as well as the surrounding regions, through Abū 'Alī ibn Rashīd. In that letter, he wrote: "...I have selected Abū 'Alī ibn Rashīd to replace Ḥusayn ibn

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Mashhad, University of Mashhad, 1348 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 510, Ḥadīth 984).

In some traditions, Ḥusayn ibn 'Abd Rabih (meaning the father of 'Alī) has been mentioned, but 'Allāmah Muḥammad Taqī Shūshtarī has brought forward some evidence which shows that the individual that was the representative of Imam Hādī (a) was 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Abd Rabih, and not his father (Tastarī, Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī, Qāmūs al-Rijāl, Tehran, The Center for Book Publications, vol. 3, p. 468).

[10] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 513, Ḥadīth 991.

- Doctor Ḥusayn, Jāsim, The Political History of the Ghaybah of the Twelfth Imam, translated by Doctor Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī Ayatollāhī, First Print, Tehran, Amīr Kabīr Institute, 1367 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 137.

[11] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 514, Ḥadīth 992.

- Doctor Ḥusayn, Jāsim, Ibid, p. 137-138.

ʿAbd Rabih and my previous deputies, and his position is the same to me as that of Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd Rabih. I have also given the authority of the previous deputies to Abū ʿAlī ibn Rashīd, so that he can collect the money related to me. I have appointed an individual to this position who is worthy of and suitable for managing your affairs. You, may God's mercy be upon you, should go to him to pay your dues. May it not be that you strain your relations with him, and do not even think of opposing him. Hasten towards the obedience of God and the purification of your wealth. Abstain from shedding each other's blood. Assist one another in the path of good action and piety, and be pious so that God covers you with his mercy. Remain connected with God and do not die except as Muslims. **I consider obeying his orders to be as necessary as obeying mine, and disobeying him to be a form of disobedience against myself.** Therefore, remain on this path and God will reward you; through his grace, he will improve your situation. (Allah) is giving and generous with his treasures, and he is merciful and magnanimous towards his servants. Both us and you are under his protection. I have written this letter with my own hand. All praise and thanks is only to God."[12]

ʿAlī ibn Jaʿfar was one of the other deputies of Imam Hādī (ʿa). He was from Hamīnīya, a village near Baghdad. The news of ʿAlī ibn Jaʿfar's activities reached Mutawakil, and Mutawakil arrested and imprisoned him. After spending a long period of time in jail, he was freed, and by the order of Imam Hādī (ʿa), he left for the city of Mecca and took up residence there.[13] In mentioning the deputies

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[12] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 513-514.
- Mudarisī, Muḥammad Taqī, Imāmāne Shīʾah va Janbishhāye Maktabī, translated by Ḥamīd Riḍā Ājhīr, Mashhad, The Islamic Research Institute, p. 323.

[13] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 607, Ḥadīth 1129.
- Masʿūdī, Ithbāt al-Waṣīya, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maṭbaʿat al-Ḥaydarīa, 1374 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 233. God willing, we will discuss ʿAlī ibn Jaʿfar's activities in Mecca in further detail in the chapter on Imam ʿAskarī (a).

of Imam Hādī ('a), we must also mention Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad Hamidānī. Imam Hādī ('a) wrote a letter to him saying: "The money you sent has arrived. May God accept this from you and be satisfied with our Shia, and place them with us both in this world and the next."

This letter clearly shows that Ibrāhīm had financial responsibilities which he performed on behalf of the Imam ('a). In addition to this, he was also responsible for delivering the collected money of the Shia to the Imam. Later in that letter, Imam Hādī ('a) commended his activities and said: "I wrote a letter to Naḍr[14] and instructed him not to hinder you or oppose you; I have made your position clear to him. I have also instructed Ayūb[15] in the exact same matter. Likewise, I sent a letter to your friends in Ḥamidān and have established that they should follow you, and have reminded them that: 'We do not have any deputies in that area besides yourself.'"[16]

In any case, the role of the deputies and representatives (particularly, during the rule of Mutawakil) is quite clear at this point. Mutawakil, in turn, engaged in training military forces who were ideologically anti-Alawī, in order to counter these organizations which were working against him. He enacted a policy of arresting Shias and applied this policy with such severity and harshness that some of the Imam's deputies in Baghdad, Madā'in, Kūfah, and other regions of Iraq, died while under torture. Another group was arrested by Mutawakil and they suffered greatly in his jails.[17] These policies seriously hampered the Imam's

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[14] Naḍr ibn Muḥammad Hamidānī (Tanqīh al-Maqal, vol. 3, p. 271).

[15] Ayūb ibn Nūḥ ibn Dāraj (Qāmūs al-Rijāl, Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmīya, al-Ṭabia'at Lijamā'at al-Mudarisīn Biqum al-Mushariffah, Second Edition, 1410 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 242).

[16] Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Ma'rifatul Rijāl, Mashhad, Mashhad University, 1348 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 611-612, Ḥadīth 1136.

[17] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 603 and 607 (Ḥadīth: 1122, 1129, and 1130).

- Doctor Ḥusayn, Jāsim, The Political History of the Ghaybah of the Twelfth Imam, translated by Doctor Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī Ayatollāhī, First Print, Tehran, Amīr Kabīr Institute, 1367 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 83.

network, but despite these serious challenges, Imam Hādī ('a) was able to keep the system active and effective in achieving its goals.

The Expulsion of the Imam to Sāmarrā'

Mutawakil, following the policy of his forefathers, decided to do something which would finally set his mind at ease in order to keep Imam Hādī ('a) under closer surveillance and control. In previous pages, we learned about Ma'mūn's method of dealing with the Imam who lived during his time period. Ma'mūn, through the marriage which he brought about, was able to create a means of control over the Imam's ('a) life. This level of control was so great that even when the Imam ('a) was in his own house, he was under the watchful eye of the caliph. Virtually all of the Imam's ('a) actions and words were under close watch.

After the martyrdom of Imam Jawād ('a), and the succession of Imam Hādī ('a) to the imamate, the need for similar policies became apparent to the caliph. If Imam Hādī ('a) was allowed to continue living in Medina, he would be out of reach of the caliph and thus pose a serious danger to his power and authority. It was here that whenever the least news reached the caliph about the potential danger of the Imam ('a), he would become encouraged towards acting upon his plans. When a letter from the governor of Medina reached the caliph, it became a cause for concern, and he decided to move the Imam ('a) from Medina to Sāmarrā'.

'Abdullah ibn Muḥammad Hāshimī, the governor of Medina at that time, had written a letter to the caliph warning him in severe terms of the political activities of the Imam ('a). This letter described the grassroots support of the Imam ('a),[18] which made the caliph fearful. At the same

- Ṭūsī, Kītāb al-Ghaybah, Tehran, Maktabah Naynawā al-Ḥadīthah, p. 212.

[18] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol.

time, Imam Hādī ('a) dispatched a letter to Mutawakil rejecting the claims of 'Abdullah, and complaining against him.

Mutawakil, much like the majority of the politicians of this world, through careful calculation, decided on a move which would kill two birds with one stone. He ended up removing 'Abdullah ibn Muḥammad from his position and he also ordered the scribe of his court to send a letter to the Imam ('a) which, while appearing to express great love towards him, was in reality an arrest warrant for the Imam ('a).

The letter mentioned the following: "In the name of God. After praising and thanking God, the Commander of the Faithful knows you quite well and observes your greatness and lineage to the Prophet of God. His only goal is in gaining the satisfaction and pleasure of you and of God. At the present time, it has been ordered, according to your request, that the military commander and Friday prayer leader, 'Abdullah ibn Muḥammad, be removed due to his disrespect towards you. Muḥammad ibn Faḍl has instead been appointed in his place. He has been instructed to be obedient to your orders, and to do his utmost in respecting and honoring you, so that through these means, he may gain nearness to God, his Prophet, and to the Commander of the Faithful (Mutawakil).

The Commander of the Faithful is eager to see you, in order that the pledge may be renewed. If you are inclined to visit the caliph and you have love towards him, you can depart, along with your family, friends, and supporters. The details of the journey are up to you, and you may stop

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50, p. 200.

- Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 333. In addition to 'Abdullah ibn Muḥammad, according to the narration of Mas'ūdī, Barīḥah 'Abbāsī, who was the supervisor of order in the ranks of prayer in the Ḥaramayn (Mecca and Medina), had also written to Mutawakil numerous times, saying: "If you have a need of the Ḥaramayn, then expel 'Alī ibn Muḥammad from there, for he invites the people towards himself, and a diverse group is following him." (Mas'ūdī, Ithbāt al-Waṣīya, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maṭba'at al-Ḥaydarīa, 1374 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 225).

wherever you wish. If you are thus inclined, Yaḥyā ibn Harthamah, the caliph's official, will accompany the caravan, and would be honored to serve you. You are very respected in our eyes and we are greatly inclined towards you. May the peace and blessings of God be upon you."[19]

Without a doubt, the Imam ('a) was well aware of Mutawakil's evil intentions, but he had no choice but to depart towards Sāmarrā'. Not accepting this invitation would have been used as evidence for the ones who had complained against him, and become a cause for the further incitement of Mutawakil. It would have given Mutawakil an even greater pretext and created further problems for the Imam ('a). Testimony that the Imam ('a) was aware of Mutawakil's intentions are found in a letter from the Imam ('a) himself where he said: "They brought me from Medina to Sāmarrā' by force."[20] In any case, the Imam ('a) received the invitation letter, and without having a choice, departed towards Sāmarrā' alongside Yaḥyā ibn Harthamah.[21]

The Report of the Commander of Mutawakil's Castle

Yaḥyā ibn Harthama, who was charged with taking Imam Hādī ('a) from Medina to Sāmarrā', explained the events of his mission in the following words: "I entered the city of Medina, and went to the house of 'Alī (al-Naqī).

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[19] Majlisī, Ibid, vol. 50, p. 200.
- Kulaynī, Ūṣūl al-Kāfī, Tehran, Maktabah al-Ṣadūq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 501.

[20] Majlisī, Ibid, p. 129.

[21] Ibn Shahr Âshūb, in his book Manāqib Āli Abī Ṭālib, has mentioned the summoning of the Imam (a) to Sāmarrā' to have taken place in the year 234 Hijrī. This is because he considers the residence of the Imam (a) in Sāmarrā' to have been 20 years in duration, and his passing to have taken place in 254, which therefore would place the Imam's (a) displacement in the year 234. The late Shaykh Mufīd in his Irshād (p. 333) has written: "Mutawakil wrote a letter to the Imam (a) in the year 243, but the narration of Kulaynī on this matter shows that in the year 243 a copy of this letter was made" (Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 501), and it was not the actual year that the Imam (a) was summoned to Sāmarrā'. From a political angle, the opinion of Ibn Shahr Âshūb seems more substantial, for if we pay attention to the fact that Mutawakil's caliphate began in the year 232 Hijrī, then it is unlikely that he was uninformed or did not care about the Imam's activities for a period of 11 years.

After I entered his house, the people realized that he had been summoned, and a strange disquiet and distress arose in the city. There was so much yelling and wailing, that, until that day, I had never witnessed anything quite like it.

At first, through swearing and giving my pledge, I tried to calm them down. I said: 'There are no ill intentions in this matter, and I am not an agent designed to harass or bother him.' Then I engaged in inspecting and searching the (Imam's) house and his belongings. I did not find anything in his room except for a number of Qurans and books of supplication. Several agents then escorted him outside of his house, and I served him from there until Sāmarrā'.

After entering Baghdad, I initially met with Isḥāq ibn Ibrāhīm Ṭāhirī, who was the governor of Baghdad. He said to me: 'Yaḥyā, this gentleman is the descendent of the Prophet; if you encourage and provoke Mutawakil in killing him, then know that his avenger and your enemy will be the Prophet of God himself.' In response, I said: 'I swear by God that I have not seen anything but goodness from him, for me to do such a thing.' Then I began to journey towards Sāmarrā', and after entering the city, I narrated what had taken place to Waṣīf Turkī.[22] He, in turn, said to me: 'If one hair on his head is harmed, you will be the one responsible.' The words of Isḥāq ibn Ibrāhīm and Waṣīf Turkī surprised me. After entering the palace of Mutawakil and meeting with him, I gave him a report of my journey. At this point, I saw that Mutawakil was also treating the Imam ('a) with much respect and honor."[23]

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[22] Waṣīf was one of the influential court officials during the time of Mutawakil.

[23] Sibṭ ibn Jawzī, Tadhkirah al-Khawāṣ, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maṭba'ah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 359-360.
From the words of Yaḥyā ibn Harthamah, in regards to the people's reaction to the summoning of the Imam (a), it is quite clear how the Imam (a) was regarded and his level of social support. Also, from the words of Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm and Waṣīf, a similar understanding can be gained as to how much the Imam (a) was loved by the masses, as well as by individuals in the caliph's court.

The Imam's Arrival into Sāmarrā'

In accordance with Mutawakil's order, and on the pretext that the place where the Imam ('a) was to live was not yet ready, the Imam ('a) was instead housed in a very low scale and humble residence. The inn he was taken to was known as Khān al-Ṣa'ālīk, a place where the poor and needy were housed; the Imam ('a) spent his first day at this inn. The intention behind this arrangement was to humiliate the Imam ('a) and lower his position in the eyes of the people.[24] The next day, another place was selected as the permanent residence of the Imam ('a).[25]

As far as appearances were concerned, the Imam ('a) was free to do whatever he wished and go wherever he pleased, but the reality was that he was essentially a prisoner. In his residence, he was constantly under watch, and the agents of the caliph would know of all his comings and goings, as well as his meetings. Yazdād, the Christian physician and the student of Bakhtīshū', has written on the issue of the forced transfer of the Imam ('a) to Sāmarrā: "If anyone has knowledge of the unseen, it is he. They have brought him here in order to prevent the people from rallying around him, for they view his very existence as a threat to their government."[26]

The fear and terror that Mutawakil felt from the spiritual influence of the Imam ('a) over the people can be properly felt from his selection of the Imam's ('a) place of residence. Even in spite of all these precautions, Mutawakil still felt fearful and anxious about the presence of the Imam ('a); he felt that his government was under serious

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[24] The intention behind this action was not hidden from the people— Sālih ibn Sa'īd is included amongst them. He has mentioned: "On the day that the Imam (a) entered Sāmarrā', I said to him: 'They are continuously trying to extinguish your light, and for this very reason, they have put you in this lowly and wretched inn.'" (Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, p. 334; 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, vol. 3, p. 173).

[25] Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 334.

[26] Majlisī, Ibid, vol. 50, p. 161.

threat. He feared that, somehow, the followers of the Imam ('a) would secretly get in touch with him and plan a revolt against the caliph. He further imagined that they were collecting money and stockpiling weapons to these ends, and that they were training individuals to fight against him.

From time to time, the people who surrounded the caliph would warn him in regards to the possibility of the Imam ('a) revolting. Therefore, Mutawakil would order that the house of the Imam ('a) be searched carefully. Although the agents would return empty-handed each time, Mutawakil remained deeply anxious and felt a sense of acute danger.

A Drinking Party is Disrupted

During one incident, some individuals complained about Imam Hādī ('a) in front of Mutawakil. They claimed that there were weapons, letters, and other things in his house which had been sent from his followers in Qum and that the Imam ('a) was about to revolt against the government. Mutawakil quickly sent a group of agents to raid his house at night, but they did not find anything of value. They instead found the Imam ('a) sitting alone in a room, wearing woolen clothing, with the door closed. He was sitting on the ground, which was covered with sand and grit, busy worshipping God and reciting the Quran.

They took the Imam ('a) in that very state to Mutawakil and said: "We did not find anything in his home, and we found him facing the Qiblah and reciting the Quran." When Mutawakil saw the Imam ('a), he was taken by the Imam's ('a) majesty and dignity. He began to treat the Imam ('a) with respect and honor and sat him next to himself. He then offered him the cup of wine that he had in his hand. It appears that the caliph had become so accustomed to drinking and other such sins that he had long forgotten what was considered lawful and unlawful in

Islam. The Imam ('a) said: "My blood and my flesh has never been mixed with such a thing, so excuse me." Mutawakil withdrew the cup and instead said: "Then recite a poem."

The Imam ('a)... said: "I have few poems memorized by heart." Mutawakil said: "In that case, you must recite something." The Imam ('a) then recited a poem, which roughly translates into: *"The predatory and powerful rulers have turned night into day on the mountain peaks, while the strong protected them. Yet the mountains were unable to save them from death. After a period of honor and majesty, they were pulled down from their secure places and placed in their graves; what a disagreeable house and resting place. After they were entrusted to the dirt, a voice calls out: 'Where are the bracelets, crowns, and fine clothing? Where are those faces which were nurtured in blessings and finery, and for whom fine curtains were hung?' The Grave answered for them, saying: 'The worms are fighting each other over who gets to consume those very faces!' They drank and ate in this world, but today, those very people, who were the devourers of all things, are food for the insects and worms of the grave— they are now to be devoured.*

Such homes did they build to protect themselves from the vicissitudes of time, but in the end, they left those homes and families, and hastened towards the abode of the grave! What wealth and savings they had stored, yet they left them all and went, leaving these riches for their enemies. Their homes and palaces were transformed into ruins, and their inheritors likewise hastened towards their own dark graves."

The effects of the Imam's words were such that Mutawakil began to weep deeply, until his beard was soaked with his tears. The other individuals who were present, also began to cry. Mutawakil ordered that the wine cups be put away, and he presented 4,000 dirhams to the Imam ('a), and returned the Imam ('a) to his home with dignity and

respect.[27]

Imam Hādī in Mutawakil's Prison

Mutawakil possessed a strange hatred and animosity towards the Imam ('a), and he was always working on new plans to harass and persecute him. Although the Imam ('a) lived the life of a virtual prisoner in Sāmarrā' and was constantly under surveillance, this proved to not be enough for the caliph. At one point, Mutawakil ordered that the Imam ('a) be imprisoned for a period of time.

Ṣaqar ibn Abī Dalf has narrated: "When they brought Imam Hādī ('a) to Sāmarrā', I went to see how he was doing. Zarrāfi, the doorkeeper of Mutawakil, saw me and instructed me to enter. I entered and he asked: 'What is the reason behind your visit?' I said that: 'I have come for a good cause.' He then told me to sit and wait. I sat down, but after some time, fear overtook me and I went deep into thought, thinking that I had perhaps made a mistake in coming to visit the Imam ('a).

Zarrāfī took care of the other people who had come and he then excused them. When the room became empty, he said: 'What did you need and for what reason did you come?' I said: 'I have come for a good cause.' He said: 'Perhaps you have come to see how your master is doing.' I said: 'Who is my master? My master is the caliph!'

He then said: 'Be silent, for your master is on the path of the truth. Do not be afraid, for I am also on (the path) of your conviction and consider him as my Imam.' After

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[27] Mas'ūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 4, p. 11.
- Shablanjī, Nūr al-Abṣār, Cairo, Maktabah Mashhad al-Ḥusaynī, p. 166.
- Sibṭ ibn Jawzī, Tadhkirah al-Khawāṣ, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maṭba'ah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 361.
- Ibn Khallakān, Wafīyāt al-'Ayān, Researched by: Doctor Iḥsān 'Abbās, Second Edition, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Sharīf al-Rāḍī, 1364 Hijrī Shamshi, vol. 3, p. 272.
- Qalqashandī, Māthar al-'Anāfah Fī Ma'ālim al-Khalāfah, Second Edition, Maṭba'at Ḥūkūmat al-Kuwayt, vol. 1, p. 232.

In various historical texts, there are some small differences in the number of couplets and lines.

hearing this, I thanked God. He then said: 'Do you wish to see him?' I said: 'Yes.' He said: 'Sit for a while until the messenger leaves.' When he left, he indicated towards me and said to his servant: 'Take him to the room where the Alawī is imprisoned; leave him there, and return.'

When I went to see the Imam ('a), I saw him sitting on a straw mat, and there was an open grave excavated in front of him. I gave him my Salāms (greetings). He asked me to sit and so I sat down. He asked: 'For what reason have you come?' I replied: 'I have come to see how you are doing.' At this point, I looked at the grave and began to weep. He said: 'Do not cry, for no harm will come to me during this captivity.' Hearing him say this, I thanked God. Then, I went ahead and asked him the meaning of a tradition, and the Imam ('a) answered. After answering, he said: 'Leave me and go outside, for I do not feel safe for you and I fear that they may harm you.'"[28]

From one perspective, this event shows the severity and harshness of Mutawakil's treatment of Imam Hādī ('a), and from another perspective, it shows the extent of the Imam's ('a) influence over the court officials, even the very high ranking officials of the caliph. During the last days of his life, Mutawakil ordered his agent Sa'īd ibn Ḥājib to murder the Imam ('a). Yet, the Imam ('a) said: "It will not be more than two days until Mutawakil shall be killed," and the events took place in exactly this manner.[29]

The Crimes and Persecution of Mutawakil against the Shia

Out of all the 'Abbāsid caliphs, Mutawakil was known for having committed the most crimes during his rule. He

[28] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 49, p. 194.
- Imam 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Hādī, Mu'assaseye Dar Rāhe Ḥaq, p. 16.

[29] 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 184.

had a very particular hatred and animosity against Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), his family, and his followers. As a result, his rule is counted as being among the most difficult for the Shias and the Alawīs. While, for the sake of space, we cannot mention all of his crimes, let us take a cursory look at a few of them:

1- During his rule, a group from amongst the Alawīs was imprisoned, while another group was forced to flee and became fugitives. Muḥammad ibn Ṣālih, who was from the grandchildren of Imam al-Mujtabā (ʿa), and Muḥammad ibn Jaʿfar, who was one of the emissaries of Ḥasan ibn Zayd, who had revolted in Tabaristān, are two examples of such individuals.[30]

2- In the year 236 Hijrī, Mutawakil ordered that the shrine of the Master of Martyrs, Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa), be demolished, and the land around it cultivated. He also had a military post built nearby, in order that visits to the shrine could be prevented. It seems that no one from among the Muslims was prepared to demolish the shrine of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa), so Mutawakil gave the task to an individual named Dīzaj, who was from among the Jews. Mutawakil then announced that visiting Imam Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī (ʿa) was now prohibited, and if anyone were to do so, they would face punishment.[31] Mutawakil feared that the shrine of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) would become a base of action against him. He feared that the martyrdom of the Imam (ʿa) would serve as an example for people willing to fight to the death against his oppressive government, in the same way that the Imam (ʿa) had been killed fighting against the oppressors of his time. In spite of these measures, the Shias and supporters of the Imam (ʿa) did not give up their pilgrimages to the shrine. These pilgrims suffered through

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[30] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Maqātil al-Ṭālibīīn, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 397-418.

[31] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Ibid, p. 395.

- Masʿūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 4, p. 51.

- Suyūṭī, Tārikh al-Khūlafā, Third Edition, Baghdad, Maktabah al-Muthannā, p. 347.

every kind of torture and harm, but they were not willing to give up their visits under any circumstance. After the death of Mutawakil, the Shias, with the assistance of the Alawīs, once again rebuilt and restored the shrine of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa).[32]

The destruction of the shrine of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) enraged the Muslims, and this reached the point that the people of Baghdad began to write slogans against Mutawakil on the doors and walls of buildings and mosques. Poets would compose and recite verses satirizing and insulting him.

3- Under his rule, he martyred many notable individuals from among the Muslims and the supporters of the family of the Prophet; one of these individuals was Ibn Sikkīt, a loyal companion of Imam Jawād (ʿa) and Imam Hādī (ʿa). Ibn Sikkīt was a famous Shia poet and literary figure, who was executed on the orders of Mutawakil, due to his crime of loving Imam ʿAlī (ʿa).[33] One day, Mutawakil pointed to his two sons and asked him: "Are these two sons of mine more beloved in your view or Ḥasan and Ḥusayn?" Ibn Sikkīt became very angry at this outrageous comparison and his blood began to boil. Without hesitation, he said: "I swear by God that in my view, Qanbar, the servant of ʿAlī is better than both you and your two sons." Mutawakil became enraged and ordered that his tongue be pulled out from the back of his head.[34]

4- Khatīb Baghdādī, has written on the subject of the torture and persecution of the supporters of the family of

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[32] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Ibid, p. 396. Also refer to: Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Sadir, vol. 7, p. 55.

[33] The name of Ibn Sikkīt was Yaʿqūb, and the name of his father was Isḥāq. He was one of the famous Shia scholars and literary figures. His expertise extended to many sciences, including the Quranic sciences, poetry, and grammar. He also composed his own books on these subjects, and according to certain experts in these fields, these books were unmatched in their depth and excellence. (Mudarris Tabrizī, Muḥammad ʿAlī, Rayḥānat al-'Adab, Third Print, Tehran, Khayyām Bookstore, 1347 Hijrī Shamshi, vol. 7, p. 570).

[34] Suyūṭī, Ibid, p. 348.

- Māmaqānī, Tanqīḥ al-Maqāl, Tehran, Jahān Publications, vol. 3, p. 570.

the Prophet by Mutawakil. He has written: "Mutawakil the ʿAbbāsid had Naṣr ibn ʿAlī Jahaḍmī lashed for narrating a tradition about the virtues and merits of Imam ʿAlī, Fāṭimah, Imam Ḥasan, and Imam Ḥusayn. He was lashed 1,000 times and Mutawakil did not leave him alone until people had testified that he was from the Ahl al-Sunnah sect."[35]

5- Mutawakil would give exorbitant amounts of money to poets like Marwān ibn Abī al-Junūb, in order that they compose poetry about the legitimacy of the ʿAbbāsid government and in slander of the Hāshimīs.[36]

6- When Mutawakil began to form a new kind of military force called the Shākirīya, he hired individuals from areas which were known for their anti-Alawī sentiments, such as Syria, Algeria, Jabal, Ḥijāz, and ʿAnaba.[37]

7- He ordered the governor of Egypt to exile the descendants of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) from Egypt to Iraq; the governor did as he was ordered. This group was later forcibly transferred to Medina in the year 236 Hijrī.[38]

8- He would fire the Shia from their government positions and destroy their standing in the public eye. For example, Isḥāq ibn Ibrāhīm was removed from his position as the governor of Sāmarrā' and Sayrawān, in the province of Jabal. He was removed on the charge of being a Shia. Other individuals lost their positions for similar reasons.[39]

Mutawakil, through the application of these methods, attempted to suppress any potential danger from the Shias towards his government. Ultimately, he was unsuccessful in preventing Shia movements from taking place, and as

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[35] Tārīkh Baghdad, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabīya, vol. 13, p. 289.

[36] Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-Hādī (a), First Edition, Beirut, 1408 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 292.

[37] Doctor Ḥusayn, Jāsim, The Political History of the Ghaybah of the Twelfth Imam, translated by Doctor Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī Ayatollāhī, First Print, Tehran, Amīr Kabīr Institute, 1367 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 82.

[38] Doctor Ḥusayn, Ibid, p. 84.

[39] Doctor Ḥusayn, Ibid, p. 84.

mentioned previously, Imam Hādī ('a) continued to communicate with the Shia in secret.

Economic Pressure on the Shia

In order to weaken the power of the Shia and destroy their potential for revolt, Mutawakil placed them under severe economic pressure. The pressure was unprecedented, in spite of the existence of many tyrannical and oppressive rulers throughout the past history of the nation. It is known that after the passing of the Prophet (ṣ), the Shia were continuously under economic stress and difficulty. In addition to the seizure of Fadak from Fāṭimah ('a), which was in reality a political move designed to weaken the economic power of Imam 'Alī ('a) and the Hāshimīs, many other examples can be witnessed throughout Islamic history. One such example involves Mū'āwīya and his tactics against the Shia, and in particular against the Hāshimīs. One of the tactics which Mū'āwīya employed in order to gain the pledge of allegiance from Imam Ḥusayn ('a) for the successorship of his son Yazīd was to put a stop on all stipends to the Hāshimīs. He hoped that by stopping the flow of money from the public treasury to the Hāshimīs, pressure would be exerted on Imam Ḥusayn ('a) and he would eventually accept the nomination of Yazīd to the successorship of the caliphate.[40]

Another example would be the economic tactics of Abū Ja'far Manṣūr Dawānīqī, the second 'Abbāsid caliph. Manṣūr implemented a widespread and comprehensive program of economic repression, and his goal in doing so was to make the people dependent upon him. He reasoned that, if the people were too busy trying to fulfil their most basic needs and satiate their hunger, they would have neither the energy, nor the time to contemplate issues

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[40] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 3, p. 511.
- Ibn Qutayba, al-Imāmah wa al-Sīyāsah, Third Edition, Cairo, Maktabah Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1382 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 191.

related to their society and government. One day, Manṣūr, in a gathering of his court officials, sarcastically explained the reasons behind his economic policies. He said: "The Bedouin Arabs have said it well, when they say: 'Keep your dog hungry, so that he will follow you in the hopes of bread.'"[41] These words show how petty and worthless the people were in the eyes of the ʿAbbāsid rulers.

With these policies of economic deprivation, the Shias were hit with a disproportionate share of repression and hardship. This was due to the fact that they were continuously first in revolting and fighting against the oppressive rulers. As a result, the caliphs considered them to be a major threat against their government. Harun's government was not an exception to such economic tactics. Hārūn took complete control over the public treasury and spent vast amounts of money on his personal whims and desires; his court officials also engaged in similar behavior. While the caliph was busy spending massive amounts of money on his own personal whims, he would deprive the Shias of their legitimate financial rights, and through these means, he sought to cripple them economically.

Therefore, it is evident that the Shia had a long history of such economic deprivation— they were no strangers to such policies. Still, as mentioned before, the pressures exerted during the caliphate of Mutawakil were unique in their severity and breadth. To understand this issue more clearly, let us look at the following points:

1- He was so economically severe on the Shia that it has been narrated that: "During that time period, a group of Alawī women in Medina did not have even a single proper pair of clothing with which to pray. They only collectively possessed one tattered piece of clothing; during the time of prayer, they would take turns with one another in using it

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[41] Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, Ḥayāt al-Imām Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar (a), Najaf, Maṭbaʿat al-Adab, Second Edition, 1389 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 369. (Narrated from the book: The Era of Ma'mūn (Aṣr al-Ma'mūn)).

in order to pray. They remained in such difficulties until Mutawakil was killed."[42]

2- Mutawakil made 'Umar ibn Faraj Rukhkhajī the governor of Mecca and Medina. 'Umar would prohibit the people from acting kindly and with goodness towards the descendants of Imam 'Alī, and he was very severe and uncompromising in this matter. The people feared for their lives and so they stopped assisting the Alawīs and as a result, the lives of the descendants of Imam 'Alī became even more difficult.[43]

3- Mutawakil seized Fadak, which belonged to the Alawīs.[44] It has been narrated that the income generated from Fadak was equal to 24,000 dinars during that time. Mutawakil gifted Fadak to 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar Bāzīyār, who was one of his supporters.[45]

4- He ordered his governor in Egypt to:

A- Not allow any of the Alawīs to own property, ride horses, or travel from Fustat to any of the other cities.

B- Not allow any Alawī to own more than one slave.

C- In the case that a dispute arose between an Alawī and a non-Alawī, the judge must first hear the testimony of the non-Alawī, and then, without hearing the Alawī's testimony, he should rule in favor of the non-Alawī.[46]

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[42] Ḥajj Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, Tatamat al-Muntahā, Tehran, Markazī Bookstore, 1333 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 238 and 239.

- Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Maqātil al-Ṭālibīīn, Second Edition, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 396.

[43] Ḥajj Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, Ibid, p. 238 and 239.

- Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Ibid, p. 396.

[44] In Fadak, there were 11 date palms which the Prophet (s) had planted with his own hands. The descendants of Fāṭimah would gift the fruits of those trees to the Ḥajj pilgrims, and as a result of the blessing of those trees, they came to possess a great deal of wealth. 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar Bāzīyār sent an individual by the name of Bishrān ibn Abī 'Ummaya Thaqafī to Medina, in order to cut down those trees. The man cut down the trees but as soon as he returned to Baṣrah, he became paralyzed. (Mūsawī Qazwīnī Hā'irī, Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥasan, Fadak, Second Edition, Cairo, Maṭbū'āt al-Nijāḥ, 1397 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 195).

[45] Doctor Ḥusayn, Jāsim, The Political History of the Ghaybah of the Twelfth Imam, translated by Doctor Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī Ayatollāhī, First Print, Tehran, Amīr Kabīr Institute, 1367 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 84.

[46] Doctor Ḥusayn, Ibid, p. 84 (narrated from the book Walāt Miṣr, written by Kindī).

Luxurious Castles and Parties

Along with the severe pressures and restrictions which the Shia were living under, Mutawakil engaged in the wholesale plunder of the nation's public treasury. He spent exorbitant amounts of money on building luxurious palaces, and organized wasteful ceremonies and events. His palaces were both plentiful in number and exorbitant in price; he built the following palaces which each had their own names: Shāh, 'Arūs, Shabdāz, Badī', Gharīb, and Burj. The last palace, which was called Burj, cost 1 million and 700,000 dinars to build.[47] He also built another palace which was famously known by the name of Burkuwā'; this palace was considered to be the largest and best of his palaces, costing around 20 million dirhams to build.[48]

Mutawakil also had other palaces built for pleasure and sport; they were given such names as: Ja'farī, Malīḥ, Gharw, and Mukhtār. Each of these palaces ran millions of dirhams in cost, and historians have mentioned this issue in detail.[49] Mutawakil decided to circumcise his son 'Abdullah Mu'taz, and he organized a large number of expensive and wasteful ceremonies to these ends. Historians have recorded the details of these ceremonies:

"Mutawakil had a carpet made for his palatial hall, which had a length of 100 cubits and a width of 50 cubits. For the reception of the guests, 4,000 chairs were ordered which were made of gold and encrusted with jewels. By the order of Mutawakil, twenty million dirhams were set aside for "scattering." This referred to the act of giving away money to the invitees by throwing it in the air at them. One million dirhams were given away to the makeup artists, the circumcisers, and the special slaves in charge of the event.

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[47] Ibn Wāḍih, Tārīkh Ya'qūbī, Najaf, al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 223.

[48] Faqihī, 'Alī Asghar, Âali Buye, Ṣabā Publications, 1365 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 415.

[49] Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-Hādī (a), First Edition, Beirut, Dār al-'Aḍawā', 1408 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 309-315.

On the day of the event, it was asked from the circumciser of Mu'tazz how much money had been gifted to him before the food was even served? He replied: "Eighty thousand dinars were gifted to me, and this is not counting the ring, jewels, and gold items." When the total expenses of the circumcision ceremony were presented to Mutawakil, the amount equaled 86 million dirhams."[50]

This is just one example of the extravagance of Mutawakil. Naturally, it was not his money that he was spending so freely, but the money of the public treasury which belonged to the people. There are many more such examples of his government's waste, but they cannot all be mentioned for the sake of space. Suyūṭī has mentioned: "He had 4,000 female slaves in his palace and had sexual relations with all of them."[51] Mas'ūdī, the famous historian, has similarly stated that: "Money was never spent in any one period of rule, like it was spent during the rule of Mutawakil."[52]

Historical Evidence

Abū Bakr Khawarizmī, the famous historian of the Buyids (who died in either 383 or 393 Hijrī), has described the crimes of Mutawakil against the Shia and the Sādāt,[53] and he has also spoken of the aforementioned ceremony. He has written: "A leader of leaders and the master of Sayyids passes away from this world, yet no one escorts his body to the graveyard, and his grave is left unadorned. Yet when a court jester or royal clown of the 'Abbāsids passes

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[50] Faqīhī, 'Alī Asghar, Āali Buye, Ṣabā Publications, 1365 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 417.
- Doctor Munjid, Ṣalāḥudīn, Bayn al-Khūlafā wa al-Khula'ā', Third Edition, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīth, 1980 A.D, p. 33-35. The extravagant ceremony of Mu'tazz's circumcision has been mentioned by Qalaqshandī (with some slight differences in wording) in the book Māthar al-'Anāfah Fī Ma'ālim al-Khūlafā (Maṭba'at Ḥukūmat al-Kuwayt, Second Print) vol. 3, p. 367.

[51] Suyūṭī, Tārīkh al-Khūlafā, Third Edition, Baghdad, Maktabah al-Muthannā, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 350.

[52] Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 4, p. 40.

[53] The descendants of the Prophet (ṣ).

away, all the government judges prepare to escort his body to the graveyard, and the generals and governors all attend his funeral.

The atheists and sophists are secure from the evil of the ʿAbbāsids, yet anyone who is considered a Shia by them is put to death; whoever names his son ʿAlī is killed. If a Shia poet mentions the virtues of the Successor and the miracles of the Messenger, they cut out his tongue, and destroy his (poetical) works. Wāthiq and Jaʿfar Mutawakil would only give gifts to individuals who slandered the family of Abī Ṭālib, such as ʿAbdullah ibn Muṣʿab Zubayrī, Wahab ibn Wahab Buḥtarī, Marwān ibn Abī Ḥafṣah' Umawī, ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Qūrāyb Aṣmaʿī, and Bukkār ibn ʿAbdullah Zubayrī. For a period of one thousand months,[54] Amīr al-Mu'minīn (ʿa) was cursed and vilified from the pulpits, yet in the matter of his successorship, we did not doubt him in the least.

They prohibit the Alawīs from eating a single course of food, while they spend the revenue of Egypt and Ahwāz, as well the charity of the two noble Ḥarāms and the Ḥijāz on the likes of (singers) such as: Ibn Abī Maryam Madanī, Ibrāhīm Muṣalī, Ibn Jāmiʿ Sahmī, Zalzal Ḍārib, and Barṣūmā Zāmir (a flute and trumpet player). Mutawakil ʿAbbāsī possessed 12,000 slaves, yet the Master of the Sayyids was only allowed one Zangī or Sīndī slave. The pure wealth of the nation was spent on court jesters, **parties commemorating the circumcision of children**, and dog and monkey trainers. This is while they withheld every last morsel of food and drink of water from the children of Fāṭimah (ʿa).

The people upon whom khūms is Ḥalāl and charity is Ḥarām, and whose friendship and honoring is made obligatory, are at the point of death from poverty. One of them is forced to sell his clothing, while the other gives up

[54] One thousand months was the period of the Umayyid rule.

his sword as collateral. They have no sin but that their grandfather is the Messenger (ṣ), and their father is the Successor (ʿa), and their mother is Fāṭimah (ʿa), and the mother of their mother is Khadījah (ʿa), and their creed is faith in God, and their guide is the Quran. What can I say about a people who ploughed over the grave of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa), began farming around it, and exiled the visitors of that grave to various far-off cities..."[55]

The Murder of Mutawakil and the Caliphate of Muntaṣir

One night, when Mutawakil was in a completely drunken state after a party in his palace, he was killed in a plot by his son Muntaṣir with the help of the Turks. He and his vizier, Fatḥ ibn Khaqān, were killed in the year 247 Hijrī, and Muntaṣir became the next caliph.[56]

The story of Mutwakil's murder involves an incident which took place with his court jester, ʿIbādah Makhannath. During various gatherings with Mutawakil, ʿIbādah would take a pillowcase and stuff it underneath his shirt. He also happened to be balding, and so he would shave his head. Then, he would begin to sing and dance for Mutawakil, while other singers who were present would recite in unison: "This bald and fat man is here to become the caliph of the Muslims." This act was meant to disparage Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), and Mutawakil would drink wine and laugh drunkenly at this.

During one of ʿIbādah's performances, Muntaṣir (Mutawakil's son) was also present. He became upset at the performance and motioned at ʿIbādah in a threatening way. ʿIbādah became quiet out of fear. Seeing the

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[55] Khawārizmī, Rasā'īl, al-Maṭbaʿat al-ʿUthmānī, 1312 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 76-83.
- Faqīhī, Ibid, p. 53.

[56] Masʿūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 4, p. 38.
- Ḥajj Shaykh ʿAbbās Qummī, Tatammat al-Muntahā, Tehran, Markazi Bookstore, 1333 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 238.

performance come to a sudden stop, Mutawakil asked: "What happened?" ʿIbādah stood up and explained what had happened. At this, Muntaṣir stood up and said: "Oh Amīr al-Mu'minīn! The person who this individual is making fun of and the people are laughing at is the son of your uncle, and a great individual of your family; he is considered a cause of honor for you. If you want to eat his flesh yourself, then do so, but do not allow this dog and the likes of him to eat of his flesh." Mutawakil, in ridicule, ordered the singers to recite the following poem:
"This young man has become sensitive over the honor of his uncle's son.... May his head be placed in his mother's..."[57]

It was after this tense situation that Muntaṣir decided to continue with his previous plan, and kill his father with the support of the Turks. Muntaṣir, contrary to his father, was inclined towards Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) and his descendants. He instructed the people to go on the pilgrimage of Imam Ḥusayn's (ʿa), and he also changed the situation of the Alawīs, which had been one of fear and terror in the time of his father, to one of security and peace.[58]

Beyond these efforts, he also implemented three important initiatives:
1- He returned Fadak to the Alawīs.
2- He restored the Alawī endowments.
3- He removed the governor of Medina, Sāliḥ ibn ʿAlī, who had acted unjustly towards the Hāshimīs. He appointed ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn in his place, and instructed him to act with the utmost goodness towards them.[59]

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[57] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 7, p. 5 and 6.
- Imam Hādī (a), Sazmāne Tablīghātī Islāmī, Translation and Compilation Division, 1368 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 63.

[58] Qalqashandī, Māthar al-'Anāfah Fī Maʿālim al-Khalāfah, Second Edition, Maṭbaʿat Ḥūkūmat al-Kuwayt, vol. 1, p. 238.

[59] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 7, p. 116.
- Masʿūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 4, p. 51.
- Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-Hādī (a), First Edition, Beirut, Dār al-'Aḍawā', 1408 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 275.

Still, the rule of Muntaṣir was short in duration, and after him, the situation again returned to its previous unfortunate state.

Imam Hādī in Opposition to the Government Jurisprudents

Generally, it was the policy of the 'Abbāsid caliphs to focus the people's attention on the government jurisprudents and scholars, and to recognize their rulings at an official level. Still, from time to time, when Imam Hādī ('a) was in Sāmarrā', differences of opinion in jurisprudence would arise between the government scholars, and out of necessity, they would call on the Imam ('a) to help resolve their problems. The Imam ('a), with his divinely inspired knowledge and wisdom, opened up these jurisprudential issues in such a manner that the other scholars could only praise and respect him. We will mention two examples of such incidents in the following pages-

1- The Punishment of an Adulterous Christian

One day, a Christian who had committed adultery with a Muslim woman, stood trial before Mutawakil. When Mutawakil sought to punish him, the Christian suddenly converted to Islam. When Yaḥyā ibn Aktham, the supreme judge of the country saw this, he said: "His new faith has removed all traces of his actions and disbelief, and the punishment should not be enacted." Some of the other jurisprudents said: "The punishment must be enacted upon him three times." Yet other jurisprudents gave their own rulings as well. The differences in the jurisprudential rulings forced Mutawakil to seek the opinion of Imam Hādī ('a).

The situation was explained to Imam Hādī ('a) and the Imam ('a) responded: "He must be flogged..." This ruling of the Imam ('a) was faced with staunch opposition from

Yaḥyā ibn Aktham and the other jurisprudents. They said: "This ruling has no basis in any (Quranic) verse or in any tradition." They then asked Mutawakil to request a letter where the Imam ('a) explains the evidence behind his ruling. Thus, Mutawakil wrote a letter to the Imam ('a), asking him for evidence of his ruling's validity. The Imam ('a) referred to the Quranic verse which states: "But when they saw Our punishment, they said: 'We believe in Allah- the one Allah - and we reject the partners we used to join with Him.' But their professing the faith when they (actually) saw Our punishment was not going to profit them. (Such has been) Allah's way of dealing with His servants (from the most ancient times). And even thus did the rejecters of Allah perish (utterly)."[60]

Mutawakil accepted the logical response of the Imam ('a), and ordered that the adulterer be punished according to the ruling of the Imam ('a).[61] Through the mention of this noble verse, the Imam ('a) made them understand that in the same way that the faith of the polytheists did not avert God's punishment upon them, the faith of the Christian individual also did not nullify his punishment.

2- Mutawakil's Vow

One day, Mutawakil became ill, and so he swore an oath that if he was cured, he would give a "large amount" of dinars (gold coins which were used as currency during that time) in the way of God, as charity. When he was cured, he gathered the jurisprudents and asked them: "How many dinars do I need to give as charity, for it to be considered a large amount?" The jurisprudents gave different rulings in this matter. With no other recourse, Mutawakil asked the

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[60] Surah Ghāfir, Verse 84-85.

[61] Shaykh Hurr 'Āmūlī, Wasā'il al-Shī'ah, Beirut, Dār Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, vol. 18, p. 408 (Bāb 36, Min Abwāb Hadd al-Zina).
Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-Hādī (a), First Edition, Beirut, Dār al-'Aḍawā', 1408 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 240.

same question from Imam Hādī ('a). The Imam ('a) answered that he must give 83 dinars. The jurisprudents were surprised at this answer and said to Mutawakil: "Ask him based on what evidence he gave this ruling?" Mutawakil therefore asked the Imam ('a). The Imam ('a) replied: "God, in the Quran, has said: 'Assuredly Allah did help you in many battlefields...' and all of our family has narrated that the Prophet of Islam (ṣ) participated in 83 wars and expeditions over the course of his life."[62]

Imam Hādī and the Various Theological Schools of Thought

During the time of Imam Hādī ('a), many theological schools of thought had become prevalent— these included schools such as the Mu'tazilah and the Ashā'irah. Due to their prevalence, a myriad of opinions spread throughout the Muslim society, and there were many heated debates between the proponents and opponents of these schools of thought. Various issues such as predestination, Tafwīḍ,[63] the possibility or impossibility of seeing God, the corporeality of God, and various other topics had become intensely debated.

In different situations, the Imam ('a) was asked questions which were clearly inspired by the debates and opinions presented by these schools of thought. The influence of incorrect concepts and ideologies within the Shia circles manifested the dire need of guidance and intellectual leadership from the Imam ('a). As a result, the Imam ('a) engaged in many debates and discussions which proved the lack of substance and baselessness of the

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[62] Sibṭ ibn Jawzī, Tadhkirah al-Khawāṣ, Najaf, Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 360.
- Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-Hādī (a), First Edition, Beirut, Dār al-'Aḍawā', 1408 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 240.

[63] This concept means that God created the world and then left it completely to its own destiny.

viewpoints of these new schools of thought. [64]

Research and study into the intellectual life of Imam Hādī ('a) shows that the majority of his debates were in regards to these theological subjects. In addition, many traditions were narrated on this subject, which clearly prove the superiority of the Shia theological foundation over that of other schools of thought. An example of this is found in a detailed letter of the Imam ('a), which he wrote in response to the questions of the people of Ahwāz, regarding predestination and Tafwīḍ. In it, through clear reasoning, he proved that the truth of the matter is neither complete predestination, nor complete free will.[65]

The Conflict with the Ghulāt

The Ghulāt were one of the deviant and misguided groups, which were active during the imamate of Imam Hādī ('a). While the Ghulāt considered themselves Shia, their ideology and beliefs were deviant and outside the fold of the Shia creed. They had certain exaggerated beliefs in regards to the Imam ('a) and considered him as a divine being. Moreover, they would sometimes claim that they had been selected by the Imam ('a) and, as a result, they would give a bad reputation to Shias among Muslims belonging to other sects. Imam Hādī ('a) renounced this group and actively worked against them, so that through their rejection, they could not give a bad name to the Shia creed.

Some of the reasons behind the belief of the Ghulāt in the divinity of the Imam ('a), as well as their other beliefs, were partly based on:

A- The miracles, knowledge of the unseen, and other extraordinary faculties which were witnessed from the

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[64] Sharīf al-Qarshī, Ibid, p. 130.
- Ṭabarsī, Iḥtijāj, Najaf, al-Maṭba'at al-Murtaḍāwiya, 1350 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 249.

[65] Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Shu'bah, Tuḥaf al-'Uqūl, Second Edition, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmīya Lijamā'at al-Mudarisīn, 1404 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 458-475.

Imams ('a). Since this group was not capable of explaining these things in the correct way, they took it as proof of absolute divinity.
B- This deviated group wanted to remove the limits and restrictions of Islamic law, and act based upon their lower desires. They considered many of the unlawful (Ḥarām) matters as being lawful (Ḥalāl).
C- In addition, they had fixed their eyes on the property of the people and wished to appropriate the taxes paid by the Shia for their own personal use.

In any case, the Ghulāt were a dangerous group with much potential to deviate the masses. Their leaders included the following individuals:
1- 'Alī ibn Ḥasakah' Qummī
2- Qāsim Yaqṭīnī
3- Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn Bābāī Qummī
4- Muḥammad ibn Nusayr Fahrī
5- Fāris ibn Ḥātim

As an example, the beliefs of 'Alī ibn Ḥasakah' were as follows:
A- Imam Hādī is God, the creator and manager of the entire universe
B- Ibn Ḥasakah' is the messenger and the one sent by Imam Hādī for the guidance of the people.
C- None of the Islamic precepts, such as Zakāt, Ḥajj, or fasting are obligatory.

Muḥammad ibn Nusayr Fahrī is quoted as having said:
A- Imam Hādī ('a) is the creator and lord of the universe.
B- Marriage with the close relatives (Mahārim) such as one's mother, daughter, or sister, are allowed and lawful.
C- Sodomy is lawful, and is one of the legitimate ways of fulfilling one's lusts, which God has not forbidden.
D- The souls of the dead transmigrate into the bodies of

the people who are born in the future (reincarnation).[66]

Imam Hādī ('a), in the letters and responses that he provided to the questions of the Shia on this matter, introduced this group as disbelievers and possessors of a deviant ideology. He further instructed the Shia to distance themselves from them. The Imam ('a), in his response to a question from one of the Shias about Ibn Ḥasakah and his beliefs, wrote the following:

"Ibn Ḥasakah, may God's curse be upon him, has lied. I do not consider him to be from my friends or followers. What is wrong with him? May God remove his mercy from him! I swear by God... that Muḥammad (ṣ) and the previous prophets ('a) were sent only in the religion of worshipping the one God, and enjoining towards the prayer, the Zakāt, the Ḥajj, and the Wīlāyah (the guardianship of the Imams); Muḥammad (ṣ) has only invited people towards the one God, for whom there is no equal. We, who are his successors, are the slaves of God and do not associate others with him. If we obey him, we will be subject to his mercy, and if we disobey him, we will be subject to his punishment. We do not have any Ḥujjah over God, but God has a Ḥujjah over us and over all of his creation. I am averse to anyone who says such things, and seek God's protection against such words. Stay away from them and place them in difficulty and hardship. If you gain access to one of them, break his head with a stone."[67]

In a letter to 'Ubaydī, the Imam ('a) wrote of his aversion to Fahrī and Ibn Bābāī Qummī. He wrote the following in regards to them: "I am averse to Fahrī (Muḥammad ibn Nusayr) and Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn Bābāī Qummī, and I warn you and all of the Shias against

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[66] Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-Hādī (a), First Edition, Beirut, Dār al-'Aḍawā', 1408 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 335.

[67] Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Marifat al-Rijāl, Mashhad, Mashhad University, 1348 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 519, Ḥadīth 997.

- Shaykh Ḥurr 'Âmūlī, Wasā'īl al-Shī'ah, Beirut, Dār Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, vol. 18, Kītāb al-Ḥudūd, Abwāb Ḥad al-Muḥārib, Bāb 7, p. 554.

their sedition, and I curse them. These two individuals eat the property of the people in our name, and are the cause of sedition and trouble. May God punish them and entangle them in sedition. Ibn Bābāī thinks that I have nominated him to prophethood and he is my Bāb (gate). May God curse him. Satan has gained mastery over him and has misguided him. If you can, break his head with a stone. He has tormented me— May God torment him in this world and the next."[68]

Fāris ibn Hātam, who was one of the leaders of the Ghulāt, was cursed and refuted by the Imam ('a). In addition, during a dispute that took place between him and 'Alī ibn Ja'far,[69] 'Alī was supported by the Imam ('a). The religious deviation and the deviating presence of Fāris were so great that the Imam ('a) ordered his killing, and guaranteed paradise for the one who killed him. He wrote: "Fāris has committed certain actions in my name, and he is deceiving the people, calling them towards deviation in the religion. Shedding his blood is now permissible. Who is it who will relieve us through his killing? In return, I will guarantee paradise for that person." One of the companions of the Imam ('a), by the name of Junayd, complied with his order and rid the society of his evil by killing him.[70]

The Controversy over the Created Nature of the Quran

One of the most heated controversies during the era of Imam Hādī ('a) was the debate over whether the Holy Quran was created or not. The Mu'tazilah were a group who believed, to an excess degree, in the power of the

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[68] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 520, Ḥadīth 999.

[69] 'Alī ibn Ja'far was one of the most important and industrious representatives of Imam Hādī (a).

[70] Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Marifat al-Rijāl, Mashhad, Mashhad University, 1348 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 524, Ḥadīth 1006.
- An Analysis of the History of the Time of the Tenth Imam- Imam Hādī (a), Markaze Tahqīqāt Islāmī, Qum, 1370 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 132-134.

human intellect, and they used this power to attempt to understand various ideological issues. This group expressed the belief of the created nature of the Quran, and in turn, its non-eternal essence. They opposed the belief of the Ashā'īrah and the Ahl al-Ḥadīth, who believed that the Quran was eternal (Qadīm). This controversy soon gained even more momentum, and took on the form of two diametrically opposed ideological outlooks.

According to researchers, the debate over the created nature of the Quran began towards the end of the Umayyad era, which was the beginning of the second century Hijrī. It is known that the first individual who brought up this issue within Islamic circles was Ja'd ibn Dirham, the teacher of Marwān ibn Muḥammad, the last Umayyad caliph. He, in turn, had learned about this topic from Ābān ibn Sam'ān, who in turn had learned it from Ṭālūt ibn A'ṣam, who was from the Jews. Ja'd, after discussing this issue, became a wanted man and was forced to flee to Kūfah. There, he taught this concept to Jahm ibn Ṣafwān Tirmidhī.[71]

Some believe that the concept of the eternal nature of the Quran in the Islamic society was the result of Christian influence, for Christians consider Christ to be the "Word of God," and as a result, the word of God is from God himself, who is eternal. Support for this viewpoint is found in a directive of Ma'mūn, who wrote to Isḥāq ibn Ibrāhīm, the governor of Baghdad at the time, condemning the Ashā'īrah, who speak of the Quran in the same manner as the Christians speak about Jesus.

In any case, during the rule of Hārūn, Bishr Marīsī, who was, again, of Jewish extraction, continued this discussion,

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[71] Khālid ibn 'Abdullah Qasrī killed Ja'd on the day of 'Īd al-Qurbān in the city of Kūfah. Jahm was killed in the year 128 by Sālim ibn Ahwāz in the city of Marw. (Aḥmad Amīn, Ḍaḥya al-Islām, vol. 3, p. 162) It is perhaps for this reason that during later times, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, an important leader of the Ahl al-Ḥadīth, would call those who believed in the created nature of the Quran as disbelievers and "Jahmīs."

and spent a period of 40 years propagating the concept of the created nature of the Quran. One day, he received news that his teachings had come to Hārūn's attention, and that Hārūn had threatened him with death in absentia; after this, he became a fugitive.

This heated debate continued between these groups until Ma'mūn exacerbated the situation and poured further fuel on the fire. Ma'mūn was an individual who was learned and scholarly, and as such, he was familiar with philosophy, jurisprudence, and the rules of Arabic grammar. He was also someone who liked to discuss and debate intellectual matters in great detail. From his youth, he had an inclination towards the Mu'tazilah, and supported the concept of the created nature of the Quran. The jurisprudents and Ahl al-Ḥadīth worried that he would perhaps take the reins of the caliphate and spread this ideology. This reached the point that Fuḍayl ibn 'Ayāḍ would openly state: "I seek long life for Hārūn from God, so that I can be free from the evil of the caliphate of Ma'mūn."[72]

His prediction ended up being accurate. Ma'mūn, after reaching the caliphate, officiated the Mu'tazilah as the official school of thought of the Muslim nation. As a result, the opinion of the created nature of the Quran was officially supported by the government, and furthermore, the power of the government was mobilized into suppressing those who disagreed with this viewpoint. The people who opposed this opinion, who were called the Ahl al-Sunnah at the time, resisted, causing the situation to spiral out of control and become much more than a simple theological difference. It was quickly transformed into an ideological and political matter, becoming the most fiercely debated issue of the time, both among the masses, as well as the scholars.

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[72] Jurjī Zaydān, The History of the Islamic Civilization, translated by 'Alī Jawāhir Kalām, Tehran, Mu'assassah Amīr Kabīr, 1336 Hijrī Shamshi, vol. 3, p. 214.

In the year 218 Hijrī, Ma'mūn sent a directive to Isḥāq ibn Ibrāhīm (the governor of Baghdad), instructing that all judges, witnesses, narrators of tradition, and government officials should be given ideological examinations. Anyone who believed in the created nature of the Quran was to be allowed to remain in their position, and all those who did not, were to be removed.[73] This directive came to be famously known as the Miḥnat al-Qurān.[74]

The individual who encouraged Ma'mūn, and later Mu'taṣim and Wāthiq 'Abbāsī in this action was Ibn Abī Du'ād, the famous 'Abbāsid government appointed judge, who had reached his position after the removal of Yaḥyā ibn Aktham as the supreme judge of the land. Ibn Abī Du'ād was very famous in the society and he was sometimes compared to the Baramakah family. His role in the Miḥnat al-Qurān is an important one, and some have even mistakenly assumed that the original idea was his.

In any case, the persecution of the 'Abbāsid government reached the point that those opposed to this idea were tortured and the prisons were filled with them. Even the well-known Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, who persisted in defending his beliefs, was flogged.[75] It has been mentioned that during the rule of Wāthiq, Aḥmad ibn Naṣr Khazā'ī was also killed, and Yūsuf ibn Yaḥyā Burayṭī, the student of Shāfi'ī, was tortured and ended up dying as a result, in an Egyptian prison. Ya'qūbī has narrated a strange story on this matter. He has written: "The Emperor of Rome wrote a letter to Wāthiq, the 'Abbāsid caliph, informing him that he had a large number of Muslim prisoners of war with him. If the caliph was willing to pay a ransom for them, he was prepared to free them. Wāthiq accepted this proposal and sent some of his representatives to the border. The

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[73] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 6, p. 423.
- Suyūṭī, Tārīkh al-Khūlafā, Baghdad, Maktabah al-Muthannā, p. 308.

[74] The word "Miḥnah" means an examination.

[75] Mas'ūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 3, p. 464.

representatives of the caliph began to process the prisoners, one at a time, asking each one of them their respective opinion on the created nature of the Quran. Only those who said they believed in the created nature of the Quran were then released. After their release, they were given some clothing and money."[76]

This form of persecution and harassment aroused the anger of the masses against the Mu'tazilah. Therefore, when Mutawakil 'Abbāsī reached the caliphate, he took the side of the Ahl al-Ḥadīth and put an end to the Miḥnat al-Qurān. Still, this controversy did not easily die down and it remained an important topic of discussion in the society for a long period of time.[77]

Imam Hādī's Position

Since the Imams ('a) were responsible for teaching the true Islamic belief system, they considered silence in the face of such debates and discussions as being impermissible. They helped to clarify where the line between falsehood and truth stood, and engaged in teaching authentic Islam to the people. They also warned people against engaging in useless debates and discussions. Rayyān ibn Ṣalt said to Imam Riḍā ('a): "What is your opinion in regards to the Quran?" The Imam ('a) said: "The Quran is the word of God— just that! Do not debate on this matter more than this for you will become misguided."

The words which have been narrated from Imam Hādī ('a) on this subject are also very clear. In response to one of the Shias of Baghdad, he wrote the following:[78] "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Gracious. May God save

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[76] Tārīkh Ya'qūbī, Najaf, al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 215.

[77] For further information on the debate over the created nature of the Quran, please refer to the following sources: Tārīkh Khūlafā, Suyūṭī, p. 306-312; Ḍaḥya al-Islām, Aḥmad Amīn, Seventh Edition, Cairo, al-Maktabah Miṣrīyah, vol. 3, p. 155-207; Buḥūth Fī Milal wa al-Niḥal, Ja'far al-Subḥānī, Second Edition, Qum, Lajinat Idārat al-Ḥawzah al-'Ilmīyah, 1411 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 252-269.

[78] Ṣadūq, al-Tawhīd, Tehran, Maktabah al-Ṣadūq, 1387 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 224.

(both) you and us from becoming entangled in this deviation, for in this case he has bestowed upon us the greatest blessing; if not, then there is destruction and misguidance. In our opinion, debate and dispute over the Quran (over its created or non-created nature) is a (religious) deviation, in which those who question and those who answer are both implicated. The one who questions is after something which he is not worthy of, and the one who answers puts himself into difficulty and hardship for something which is beyond his reach.

The creator is none other than God, and besides him, all (things) are created. The Quran is also the word of God. Do not create a name for it (from yourself), for you will become misguided. May God make us an example of his word, for he says: 'Those who fear their Lord in their most secret thoughts, and who hold the Hour (of Judgment) in awe.'"[79] This stance of the Imams ('a) caused the Shia to stay away from becoming involved and entangled in these disputes, and saved them from its various associated problems.

The Students of Imam Hādī's School

As mentioned before, the era of Imam Hādī ('a) was one of tyranny and oppression, and the Imam ('a) did not possess widespread freedom of action. His era was significantly different than the time of Imam Bāqir ('a), and in particular, the time of Imam Ṣādiq ('a). Still, Imam Hādī ('a), in those unfavorable circumstances, continued to train and educate scholars in various fields, including the narration of traditions and history. He would also train particular individuals as leaders who could guide the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). He taught these individuals various Islamic sciences, and they in turn, transmitted these treasures to later generations.

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[79] Surah Anbīyā', Verse 49.

Shaykh Ṭūsī, the well-known Muslim scholar, has mentioned the number of the Imam's (ʿa) students to have been 185 individuals.[80] Among these individuals were various notable personalities, including Faḍl ibn Shadhān, Ḥusayn ibn Saʿīd Ahwāzī, Ayūb ibn Nūḥ, Abū ʿAlī (Ḥasan ibn Rashīd), Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī Nāṣir Kabīr, ʿAbd al-Aẓīm Ḥasanī (buried in the city of Ray), and ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd Ahwāzī. Some of these individuals left behind valuable compilations and books in various Islamic sciences, and their contributions have been noted in the books of Rijāl.

The Martyrdom of the Imam

Although Imam Hādī (ʿa) lived in a state of continuous observation and restriction, he did not cooperate with the oppressors of his time to the least degree, in spite of the difficulties which this caused him. The very existence of the Imam (ʿa) and the love of the people towards him created a great deal of worry and agitation for the government. In the end, the ʿAbbāsid government decided that the only way of neutralizing the threat from the Imam (ʿa) was by having him killed. Therefore, much like the previous Imams who were all martyred, Imam Hādī (ʿa) was poisoned during the rule of Muʿtazz.[81] He reached the rank of martyrdom in the month of Rajab in 254 Hijrī, in the city of Sāmarrā, and was buried in his home.[82]

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[80] Rijāl Ṭūsī, First Edition, Najaf, al-Maṭbaʿat al-Ḥaydarīa, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 409-429. Certain individuals, such as Fāris ibn Hātim and 'Alī ibn Ḥasakah', became misguided and the Imam (a) rejected them. These individuals must naturally be removed from the total. For further information on the students of Imam Hādī, refer to the following: Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-Hādī (a), First Edition, Beirut, Dār al-'Aḍawā', 1408 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 170-230.

[81] Shablanjī, Nūr al-Absār, Cairo, Maktabah Mashhad al-Ḥusaynī, p. 166.

[82] Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 334.

The Eleventh Imam

Imam Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī

A Brief Look at the Life of the Imam

Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa) is the Eleventh Imam of the Shia who was born in the year 232 Hijrī.[83] His father was the Tenth Imam, Imam Hādī (ʿa), and his mother was the worthy lady Ḥudaythah,[84] whom some have mentioned as being named Sūsan.[85] This virtuous lady was a possessor of great Islamic wisdom and goodness. She became a great support for the Shias after the death of Imam Ḥasan ʿAskarī (ʿa), during a time which proved to be very critical and sensitive.[86]

Since the Eleventh Imam (ʿa) was forced to reside in Sāmarrā' under the orders of the ʿAbbāsid caliph, he came to be known as ʿAskarī.[87] The most famous of the Imam's (ʿa) titles are Naqī and Zakī,[88] and his kunya is Abū Muḥammad. He was 22 years of age when his father was martyred and the period of his Imamate was 6 years in duration. He lived to be 28 years old, being martyred in the year 260 Hijrī. He was buried in his home in Sāmarrā', next to the grave of his father.[89]

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[83] Kulaynī, Ūṣūl al-Kāfī, Tehran, Maktabah Ṣadūq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 503.
- Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 335.
- Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Intishārāt ʿAlāmah, vol. 4, p. 422.

[84] Shaykh Mufīd, Ibid, p. 335.
- Ṭabarsī, Ibid, p. 366.

[85] Kulaynī, Ibid, p. 503.
- ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā 'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 192.

[86] Ḥajj Shaykh ʿAbbās Qummī, al-Anwār al-Bahīyah, Mashhad, Ja'farī Bookstore, p. 151.

[87] Ṣadūq, 'Ilal al-Sharāya', Qum, Maktabah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, vol. 1, Bāb 176, p. 230.
- Ṣadūq, Ma'ānī al-'Akhbār, Tehran, Maktabah Ṣadūq- Mu'assasah Dār al-'Ilm, 1379 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 65.

[88] Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī, Dalā'il al-Imāmah, Third Edition, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Rāḍī, 1363 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 223.

[89] Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 345.
- Shaykh ʿAbdullah al-Shabrāwī, al-'Ituḥāf Biḥub al-'Ashrāf, Second Edition, Qum,

Caliphs Who Lived During the Time of the Imam

During his short imamate, Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa) lived through the time of three ʿAbbāsid caliphs. Each one of these caliphs proved to be more oppressive than his predecessor. These three are:

1- Muʿtazz Billāh (252-255 Hijrī)
2- Mohtadī Billāh (255-256 Hijrī)
3- Muʿtamid Billāh (256-279 Hijrī)

It is interesting to note that, from the very beginning of their political activities, the ʿAbbāsids revolted in the name of supporting the Alawīs and taking revenge for the wrongs committed against them by the Umayyads. Unfortunately, once they gained power, they put aside their promises and began to act in the same manner as the Umayyads. In fact, their oppression and self-centered rule was noticeably worse than that of the Umayyads.

In order to shine some light on the dark record of these three caliphs, let us take a look at a few incidents from the time of their rule:

1- Muʿtazz

He was the child of Mutawakil ʿAbbāsī, who himself reached the caliphate after Mustaʿīn was deposed in the year 252 Hijrī. After the killing of Mutawakil, the Turks gained control over the government, and things reached the point that instead of the Turks obeying the caliph's orders, the caliph would instead obey theirs. If the caliph did not do as they wished, he would either be removed or killed outright. One story in particular is a potent reminder of the situation of that time period:

One day, Muʿtazz brought his fellow companions and close friends together for a gathering. An astrologer was called upon to foretell how long Muʿtazz would remain in power as the caliph. At this critical point, a clever

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Manshūrāt al-Rāḍī, 1363 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 178-179.

individual who was present in the gathering said: "I am more aware of the period of your life and caliphate than the astrologer is." Then he expressed himself in the following words: "As long as the Turks protect the caliph and are content with his rule, he will remain firmly situated in the seat of power. And when he arouses the displeasure of the Turks, that day will be the last day of his rule."[90]

The Killing of Mu'tazz

Due to the influence and power of the Turks over the position of the caliphate, things reached the point that the caliphate became only a ceremonial position, and the actual management of affairs was practically in the hands of the Turks. One day, a group of the Turks entered the castle of Mu'tazz, took hold of him, and pulled him into one of the palace chambers. There, they began to beat him with wooden bars, burning his shirt and pushing him into the courtyard of the castle which was bathed in the hot sun. That day in particular was exceedingly hot; so hot that the ground had become like a furnace, and one could not stand still without being burnt. As a result, the caliph was seen continuously hopping up and down.

At this point, the Turks deposed him from the caliphate and had individuals witness his removal. Then, in order to kill the deposed caliph, they decided to hand him over to a person who would kill him by starving and torturing him to death. They took the former caliph, who was at this point already half dead, and threw him into a basement. The door of the basement was then boarded up and plastered, and Mu'tazz was buried alive in this fashion.[91]

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[90] Ibn Ṭaqṭaqā, al-Fakhrī, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1386 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 243.

[91] Ibn Ṭaqṭaqā, Ibid, p. 243.

- Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 7, p. 195-196.

The manner of Mu'tazz's killing has also been described in other ways. Refer to: Suyūṭī, Tārīkh al-Khūlafā, Third Edition, Baghdad, Maktabah al-Muthannā, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 360.

- Mas'ūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 4, p. 97.

2- Mohtadī

Mohtadī was the second caliph during the time of the Eleventh Imam ('a), as well as being the 14th 'Abbāsid caliph overall. He reached the caliphate after the murder of his brother, Mu'tazz, in the year 255 Hijrī. Mohtadī, much like his brother, did not have any independence in his government. He was completely at the mercy of the Turks and was forced to comply with their wishes. Mohtadī, in comparison to the other 'Abbāsid caliphs, was a moderate individual, and in terms of his attitudes and actions, can be compared to 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, one of the Umayyad caliphs. He would sometimes say: "Amongst the Umayyad caliphs, there was at least one pure individual ('Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz); it is shameful that no one exists like him amongst the 'Abbāsid caliphs."

In the same manner as 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, Mohtadī would, to some degree, pay attention to the complaints of the people, and he would adopt a moderate stance in relation to his food, clothing, and various expenditures. After reaching the caliphate, he removed all the outer vestiges of aristocratic rule which were present in the palace. In addition, all the wine-drinking implements were removed. Historians have praised him for his characteristics and actions.[92]

In spite of this positive record, it does seem that Mohtadī acted more based upon social and political considerations than anything else. He understood that in the Islamic society, there were individuals who were more knowledgeable and worthier for the position of the caliphate than himself. Through these actions, he wished to build social support and backing for his rule. If Mohtadī

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[92] Doctor Ibrāhīm Ḥasan, The Political History of Islam, translated by Abū al-Qāsim Pāyānde, Fourth Print, Tehran, Jāvīdān Publications, 1360 Hijrī Shamshi, vol. 3, p. 377.
- Mas'ūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 4, p. 96 and 103.
- Ibn Ṭaqṭaqā, al-Fakhrī, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1386 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 246.

was truly an individual who fasted daily and broke his fast with bread, salt, and vinegar,[93] then he should have suppressed his desires to the degree that he would leave the seat of power and give it over to those who were truly worthy of it.

Contrary to this, history shows that he remained in the seat of power until his final days, when he was killed, much like his brother, Mu'tazz. History has seen many such individuals, and it is very unlikely that their positive actions were done with pure intentions. The clearest example of Mohtadī's worldly nature was that he imprisoned Imam 'Askarī ('a), and kept him confined until the very night that he was murdered. Mohtadī had even made up his mind to murder the Imam ('a) but he was killed before he could act upon this.[94]

3- Mu'tamid

The third and final contemporary caliph was Mu'tamid 'Abbāsī. The Imam ('a) lived under Mu'tamid's rule for four years. Mu'tamid was born in the year 229 Hijrī and reached the caliphate with help from the Turks in the year 256; he died in the year 279.

If historians have written in praise of Mohtadī (Mu'tamid's cousin),[95] then, in direct contrast, they have written much about Mu'tamid's ethical corruption, and are in agreement that he was greatly inclined towards self-indulgence. What he apparently did not care much about, however, were the problems and difficulties of the people whom he ruled over. As a result, the people gradually

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[93] Ibn Athīr, Ibid, p. 234.
- Ibn Ṭaqṭaqā, Ibid, p. 246.
- Doctor Ibrāhīm Ḥasan, Ibid, p. 377.

[94] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 313.
- Mas'ūdī, Ithbāt al-Waṣīyah, Fourth Edition, Najaf, al-Maṭba'at al-Ḥaydarīa, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 245.

[95] Mohtadī was the son of Wāfiq ibn Mu'taṣim, and Mu'tamid was the son of Mutawakil ibn Mu'taṣim.

withdrew their support, and fastened their hopes onto his brother, Muwaffaq (Ṭalḥah). Mu'tamid was so immersed in having fun that his brother had, in reality, taken over the management of the nation's affairs. Historians have written the following in regards to Muwaffaq's authority, during the time of Mu'tamid: "Although the caliphate was officially in the hands of Mu'tamid, Muwaffaq was really in charge of handling its every day affairs, and Mu'tamid was the caliph only in name."[96]

The Political and Social Situation during the Time of the Imam

As we have seen, the 'Abbāsid caliphs did not hold themselves back from any act of pressure or control in regards to the Imams ('a). These pressures reached their peak during the times of Imam Jawād ('a), Imam Hādī ('a), and Imam 'Askarī ('a) in Sāmarrā'. The severity of the pressure was so great that the three Imams who lived in Sāmarrā', were all martyred at a young age. Imam Jawād ('a) was martyred at the age of 25, Imam Hādī ('a) at 41, and Imam 'Askarī ('a) at 28. Collectively, the lives of the three Imams were only 92 years in total. The pressure on the Imams was severe overall, but the era of Imam 'Askarī ('a) can be considered as the most severe out of these three Imams; this was for two reasons in particular:

1- Under Imam 'Askarī ('a), the Shia had manifested themselves as a great power in the land of Iraq. All the people considered the government of each and every 'Abbāsid caliph as illegitimate, and they also understood that this group (the Shia) was steadfast in their opposition to the caliphs, as they believed that the divine imamate was only to be found in the descendants of Imam 'Alī ('a).

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[96] Ibn Ṭaqṭaqā, al-Fakhrī, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1386 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 250.
- Doctor Ibrāhīm Ḥasan, The Political History of Islam, translated by Abū al-Qāsim Pāyānde, Fourth Print, Tehran, Jāvīdān Publications, 1360 Hijrī Shamshi, vol. 2, p. 378.

Evidence of the Shia's power can be found in the words of 'Ubaydullah, the vizier of Mu'tamid 'Abbāsī. After the martyrdom of Imam 'Askarī ('a), his brother Ja'far (known as Ja'far the Liar) went to 'Ubaydullah and said to him: "Leave the position of my brother to me; in exchange, I will give you 20,000 dinars yearly." The vizier yelled at him and said: "You idiot! The caliph unsheathed his sword against the people who believed that your brother and father were the Imam, in order that he could turn them away from this belief. Yet he could not do so, and in spite of his best efforts and struggles, he was not successful. If the Shia considered you to be their Imam, then you would have no need for support from the caliph or any other individual, and if they do not view you as the Imam, then our struggles in this path will not have the least use or success."[97]

2- According to Mutawātir traditions, the Abbasid clan and their supporters knew that the 'Mahdī', the promised destroyer of all oppressive and tyrannical governments, was to be from the lineage of Imam Ḥasan 'Askarī ('a). For this reason, they kept close watch on him, in order that when he had a son, they could quickly kill him and put an end to their worries. This bears a resemblance to the futile efforts of the Pharoah, when he sought to kill Prophet Moses ('a). Due to these reasons, the pressure and control over the Eleventh Imam ('a) was extraordinarily severe, and he was always under surveillance. The 'Abbāsids were so worried about the Imam's social influence, that they would summon him to the governmental palace every Monday and Thursday.[98]

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[97] 'Alī ibn 'Īsā 'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 197.
- Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Intishārāt 'Alāmah, vol. 4, p. 422.
- Kulaynī, Uṣūl al-Kāfī, Tehran, Maktabah al-Ṣadūq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 503.
- Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 338.

[98] Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Intishārāt 'Alāmah, vol. 4, p. 434.
- Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī, Dalā'īl al-Imāmah, Third Edition, Qum,

In fact, the ʿAbbāsid government was so fearful of the Imam (ʿa), that they did not suffice with such actions; Muʿtazz had the Imam (ʿa) arrested and imprisoned.[99] He went as far as ordering Saʿīd Ḥājib to take the Imam (ʿa) to Kūfah and have him killed along the way. Fortunately, after three days, the Turks ended up killing Muʿtazz instead.[100] After Muʿtazz, Mohtadī arrested the Imam (ʿa) and had him imprisoned. He also decided to kill him, but again God protected the Imam (ʿa), and the Turks revolted against the caliph and he was killed by them as a result.[101]

The Imam's Security Situation

Historical evidence shows the utter depth and breadth of the ill intent of the ʿAbbāsid government against the Imam (ʿa) and his companions. These historical records also show the dire security situation of the Imam (ʿa) during that time:

1- Abū Hāshim Dāwūd ibn Qāsim Jaʿfarī[102] has

Manshūrāt al-Rāḍī, 1363 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 226.

- Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 251.

In spite of the malevolent intentions of the caliph, each time the Imam (a) would go out in public, thousands of people would gather along his path, and they would show deep happiness and emotion. Due to the sheer number of people, the roads would become congested and blocked. At the moment that the people would see the Imam (a), they would become completely silent, and they would open the way for him. After the Imam (a) had passed, the situation would once again return to normal. (Refer to: Ghaybate Shaykh Ṭūsī, Tehran, Maktabah Naynawā al-Ḥadītha, p. 29.

[99] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 311.

[100] Majlisī, Ibid, p. 313.

[101] Shaykh Ṭūsī, Kītāb al-Ghaybah, Tehran, Maktabah Naynawā al-Ḥadītha, p. 134.

[102] Abū Hashim Jaʿfarī was from the descendants of Jaʿfar Ṭayyār (Samʿānī, al-'Ansāb, vol. 1, p. 67). He was from Baghdad, and was one of the famous personalities from among the Shia. He was also one of the very close companions of Imam Jawād (a), Imam Hādī (a), and Imam ʿAskarī (a). He, in turn, was regarded very highly by these Imams (a). (Muḥammad Taqī Shūshtarī, Qāmūs al-Rijāl, vol. 4, p. 255-257). Since he was a courageous and intrepid individual, he was arrested in the year 252 Hijrī in Baghdad, and transferred to the prison in Sāmarrā'. (Khaṭīb, Tārīkh Baghdad, vol. 8, p. 369; Samʿānī, al-'Ansāb, vol. 2, p. 67).

According to Shaykh Ṭūsī, his arrest (as well as the arrest of his companions) was related to the killing of 'Abdullah ibn Muḥammad 'Abbāsī. (Al-Ghaybah, Tehran,

narrated: "There were several of us already in prison, when they brought Imam 'Askarī ('a) and his brother Ja'far there. In order to pay our respects, we went towards the Imam ('a) and gathered around him. In the prison, there was also a Jamaḥī ('Ajamī, i.e. non-Arab) present, who claimed that he was of Alawī descent. When the Imam ('a) saw that he was there, he said: 'If an individual who was not from amongst you was not present in your midst, I would tell you when you would be released.' Then he signaled to the Jamaḥī man to leave, and he left. Then he said: 'This man is not one of you; be cautious of him. He has prepared a report for the caliph on the things which you have said, and right now he is concealing the report within his clothing.' One of the people began to search him, and they found a report which he had hidden underneath his clothes. The man had written very important things about us."[103] This narration shows that even in prison, the government had planted spies, in order to keep watch over the Imam ('a).

2- One of the companions of the Imam ('a), by the name of Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq, has narrated: "I went to the Imam ('a) and requested that he write something for me, so that I could see his handwriting. That way, if a letter reached me from him, I could recognize his writing (and be certain that it was not a forgery). The Imam ('a) said: 'My handwriting is sometimes with a thin pen and sometimes with a wide pen; therefore, if you see such a difference, do not be worried...'"[104]

3- One of the companions of the Imam ('a) has narrated: "A group of us entered Sāmarrā' and we were waiting for

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Maktabah Naynawā al-Ḥadītha, p. 136). Ṭabarsī has mentioned: "In the year 258 Hijrī Qamarī, he was imprisoned with Imam 'Askarī (a) and a group of the Alawīs." ('Ilām al-Warā, p. 373). Khatīb Baghdādī and Sam'ānī have written that he passed away in the year 251 Hijrī.

[103] Ibn Ṣabbāgh Mālikī, al-Fuṣūl al-Muhimah, Old Print, p. 304.
- Shablanjī, Nūr al-Absār, Cairo, Maktabah Mashhad al-Ḥusaynī, p. 166.
- 'Alī ibn 'Īsā 'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 222.

[104] Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Ibid, vol. 4, p. 433.

the day that the Imam ('a) would leave his house so that we could see him in the streets or alleyways. At this time, a letter reached us which said: 'None of you should greet me, and none of you should signal towards me, for therein lies the danger of death for you.'"[105]

4- 'Abd al-'Azīz Balkhī has narrated: "One day I was sitting on a street that ended at the sheep seller's market. Suddenly, I saw Imam Ḥasan 'Askarī ('a) walking towards the gate of the city. I thought to myself: 'It would be good if I yelled out- "Oh people, this is the proof of God; recognize him!" But then I thought to myself that if I say this, they will kill me.' When the Imam ('a) reached me and I looked at him, he put his finger on his lips, indicating that I should be quiet. I quickly moved forward and began to kiss his feet. He said: 'Be careful, for if you reveal, you will be killed.' That night, I went to see the Imam ('a) once more. He again repeated his words and said: 'You must be a keeper of secrets, otherwise, you will be killed. Do not place yourself in danger.'"[106]

5- During the time of Imam 'Askarī ('a), an Alawī left Sāmarrā' in search of livelihood, and went towards the land of Jabal, a mountainous region in western Iran near Ḥamedān and Qazvīn. An individual who believed in the Imam ('a), from the people of Ḥalwān, happened to meet him and asked where he had come from. The 'Alawī man replied that he had come from Sāmarrā'. He asked: "Are you familiar with the following area and street?" He said: "Yes." The man asked: "Do you have any news of Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ('a)"? He replied: "No." He again asked: "For what reason have you come to Jabal?" He replied: "In search of livelihood." The man said in response: "I have 50 dinars. Take them, and let us go to Sāmarrā' together, so that you may show me the house of Ḥasan ibn 'Alī." The Alawī

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[105] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Second Edition, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 269.

[106] Mas'ūdī, Ithbāt al-Waṣīya, Fourth Edition, Najaf, al-Maktabah Haidarīah, p. 243.

accepted and took the man to the house of the Imam ('a)...[107] This interesting event shows how great the restrictions of the Abbasid government over the Imam ('a) were.

In addition, the amount of money that the Halwani man gave to the Alawī to guide him, was a very large sum of money, and it showed how important seeing the Imam ('a) was during that time period. For example, scholars have mentioned that during that time, the value of one dinar was equal to the value of one camel;[108] this meant that one could purchase 50 camels with fifty dinars.

Seven Elements of the Imam's Activities

Imam 'Askarī ('a), in spite of the continuous pressure and control he was placed under by the 'Abbāsid government, still engaged in a series of political, social, and intellectual activities, for the sake of protecting Islam and countering the unislamic ideology which was being propagated at that time. These can be summarized into several categories:

1- The Imam's ('a) activities in defending the religion of Islam, refuting various problems and doubts that were raised by his opponents, and expanding upon the correct Islamic ideology.

2- Creating a network of representatives, through which contact was maintained with the Shias of various regions in the Muslim world.

3- Secret political activities in spite of heavy control by the 'Abbāsid government.

4- Economic assistance and support of the Shia in general and his select companions in particular.

5- The training and education of various people from

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[107] 'Alī ibn 'Īsā 'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 216.

[108] Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-'Askarī (a), Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmī, 1409 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 181.

among the Shias.
6- Widespread use of the knowledge of the unseen in winning over the hearts of the deniers of the imamate, as well as in boosting the morale of the Shia.
7- Preparing the Shia for the time when the Twelfth Imam (ʿa) would not be directly present in the society.

Let us now look at each of these seven areas of activity in greater detail:

1- Intellectual Activities

Although the Imam (ʿa) was not able to engage in the widespread propagation of knowledge due to the restrictions placed upon him by the ʿAbbāsid government, he still managed to train and educate various important figures within the Muslim world. Each one of these individuals went on to play very effective roles in spreading Islamic knowledge and resolving various doubts which had been spread by the enemies of Islam.

Shaykh Ṭūsī has recorded the number of the Imam's (ʿa) students as exceeding 100 individuals.[109] Among these students were various prominent figures, including Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq Ashʿarī Qummī, Abū Hāshim Dāwūd ibn Qāsim Jaʿfarī, ʿAbdullah ibn Jaʿfar Ḥumayrī, Abū ʿAmr ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd ʿAmrī, ʿAlī ibn Jaʿfar, and Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan Ṣaffār. To list the efforts and activities of each of them would be beyond the scope of this book but the details of their lives can be found in the books of Rijāl.

In addition to training and educating these students, there were times when severe problems would arise for the Muslims, and the only one able to solve these problems was Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa).

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[109] Rijāl, First Edition, Najaf, al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 427 and onwards.

A- The Mistake of the Philosopher

Ibn Shahr Āshūb has written: "Isḥāq Kindī was one the Muslim philosophers who lived in Iraq.[110] He wrote a book titled 'The Contradictions of the Quran.' He had spent a great deal of time in seclusion at his home, busy writing this book. One day, one of his students visited Imam 'Askarī ('a). When the Imam ('a) saw him, he asked: 'Is there not any wise individual among you, who can respond to the words of your teacher, Kindī?' The student replied: 'We are his students and we are not able to say anything against the mistakes of our teacher.' The Imam ('a) said: 'If I instruct you on an issue, can you narrate what I say to your teacher?' The student said: 'Yes.' The Imam ('a) then said: 'When you have returned from here, go to your teacher and act warmly and with great love towards him; attempt to gain closeness to him.

At the time that you have gained a high level of familiarity and closeness with him, say to him: A problem has arisen for me, whom no one is capable of answering but you. Is it possible that the author of the Quran has meant a meaning other than what we may have assumed in regards to it?' He will reply: Yes, such a thing is possible. At this time, you should say: Then how are you certain that perhaps the author of the Quran has meant something other than what you have assumed and you have used its wording in a manner other than its (true) meaning?' Then the Imam ('a) added: "He is an intelligent man— the presentation of this point is enough to make him aware of his error.

The student went to his teacher and acted just as the

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[110] The philosopher who had written this book was actually the son of Isḥāq Kindī, Ya'qūb, and not Isḥāq himself. According to the writings of Muḥammad Luṭfī Jumu'ah, Isḥāq was the ruler of Kūfah during the time of three Abbasid caliphs, namely Mahdī, Hādī, and Hārūn. (Tārīkh Falāsafat al-Islām Fī Mashriq wa al-Maghrib, al-Maktabah 'Ilmīyah, p. 1). It is also possible that the name of the father and son were mixed up, or during the time of the narration or transcription, the name of the son was accidently omitted.

Imam ('a) had instructed until he felt the time was right. He then asked the question of the Imam ('a) in the following way: 'Is it possible that a narrator can relate a matter, and intend a certain meaning, which is not grasped by the one who hears it, so much so that the intent of the narrator is lost on him? The philosopher listened attentively to the question. After thinking for a few moments, he said: 'Repeat your question.' The student once again repeated his question. The teacher deliberated for some time and said: 'Yes, this is not improbable at all. It is possible that the narrator possesses something in his mind (an intention), which does not occur to the one who hears it, and the one who hears it understands a meaning which runs counter to that which the narrator has expressed.'

The teacher, who knew that his student was not yet at the intellectual level of expressing such a question himself, looked at him and said: 'Tell me the truth; how did such a question occur to you?' The student answered: 'Why couldn't such a question just have come to me naturally?' The teacher replied: 'It is still much too early that you would have formulated such a question yourself; tell me where you learned of this?' The student said: 'The truth of the matter is that Abū Muḥammad (Imam Ḥasan al-'Askarī) introduced this question to me.' The teacher said: 'Now you have mentioned the truth of the matter. Such advanced questions can only come from this family.' Then the teacher, realizing his error and understanding the truth, ordered that a fire be kindled, and he burned all of what he had written about the 'Contradictions of the Quran.'"[111]

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[111] This event has been narrated by Ibn Shahr Āshūb in his book Manāqib (vol. 4, p. 424), who narrated from the book al-Tabdīl, which was written by Abū al-Qāsim Kūfī. Some modern day scholars have expressed doubt about the authenticity of this event and have written that: "This event shows that Kindī passed his days in intellectual instability and did not believe in Islam. Although this matter is possible, it has been narrated only in Abū Qāsim Kūfī's book in a mursal manner, meaning that it has no chain of narration attached to it and Ibn Shahr Āshūb has, in turn, narrated from him. Therefore, we cannot attest to the historical veracity of this event." (Muḥammad al-Ṣadr, Tārīkh al-Ghaybat al-Sughrā, p. 196).

B- The Monk's Fist Is Opened

One year in Sāmarrā', a very severe drought took place. Mu'tamid, the caliph of that time, ordered that the people gather and perform the prayer of Istisqā', which was a prayer for rain. For three continuous days, the people gathered and supplicated for rain, but no rainclouds formed. On the fourth day, Jathlīq, the Arch Bishop of the Christians, came to the area where the Muslims held their prayers, along with a group of monks and lay Christians. One of the monks began to pray and as soon as he lifted his hands towards the sky, large raindrops suddenly began to fall.

The following day, Jathlīq once again came and did the same thing. On that day, it rained so much that the people had no more need for rain. This caused a great deal of surprise and amazement among the people. It also caused many people to begin doubting their religion and inclining towards Christianity. This news proved disagreeable to the caliph, and without having any other way to resolve the issue, he called for the Imam ('a), who was at that time imprisoned on his orders. He said: "Help the community of your grandfather, for they are being misguided."

The Imam ('a) said: "Ask Jathlīq and the monks to go to the desert on Tuesday." The caliph said: "It has rained so much that the people do not have any more need for rain. What use is there to go to the desert now?" Imam 'Askarī ('a) said: "In order that, God willing, I can put an end to the doubt and uncertainty of the people."

The caliph ordered that the leader of the Christians, along with the monks, gather in the desert on Tuesday. On that day, Imam 'Askarī ('a), along with a great number of Muslims, also came to the desert. The Christians and their monks raised their hands in supplication to God, seeking rain; the sky soon became cloudy and it began to rain. The Imam ('a) ordered that the hand of a certain monk be held, and the object which was concealed between his fingers,

taken from him. In between his fingers, a greyish bone was found, which turned out to be a human bone!

Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa) took the bone, wrapped it in a cloth, and said to the monk: "Now supplicate for rain." The monk then held his hands out towards the sky, but contrary to his previous attempts, the clouds disappeared and the sun's rays were seen. When the people saw this, they were left in a state of amazement and surprise. The caliph asked the Imam (ʿa): "What is this bone?" The Imam (ʿa) replied: "This is the bone of a prophet, from among the divine prophets, which they had taken from their grave. No bone of a prophet is manifested (with the intention of prayer) but that rain is sent down." The caliph praised the Imam (ʿa) for his knowledge and wisdom. Later, the bone was examined and found to be exactly as the Imam (ʿa) had described. It had been taken from the grave of one of the prophets (ʿa).

This event caused the Imam (ʿa) to be released from prison, and he was elevated in the eyes of the public. The Imam (ʿa) used this opportunity and sought the freedom of his companions, who had been imprisoned along with him. This request of the Imam (ʿa) was accepted and his companions were released.[112]

2- The Creation of a Communication Network Amongst The Shia

During the time of Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa), Shi'ism had spread to various cities and areas in the Muslim nation, and there were certain areas in particular where the Shias were concentrated. These cities and territories included Kūfah, Baghdad, Nayshābūr, Qum, Ābih (Āvih), Madā'in, Khurāsān, Yemen, Ray, Azarbaijan, Sāmarrā', Jurjān, and

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[112] Shablanjī, Nūr al-Absār, Cairo, Maktabah Mashhad al-Ḥusaynī, p. 167. Also refer to: Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Intishārāt ʿAlāmah, vol. 4, p. 425.
- ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā 'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 219.

Baṣrah; these cities were considered as bases or strongholds for the Shia. Among them, Sāmarrā', Kūfah, Baghdad, Qum, and Nayshābūr were of particular importance.[113]

The vast spread and dispersion of the Shias necessitated a well-structured communication network, in order to connect them both with the Imams ('a), as well as with one another. Indeed, such a network was needed to connect them for both religious reasons, as well as political reasons. This need was initially felt during the time of the Ninth Imam ('a), and as explained previously, such a system was first created during that time. Representatives were selected and dispatched to various regions and cities for the purpose of creating this communication network.

This program was continued during the time of Imam 'Askarī ('a). According to historical records, Imam 'Askarī ('a) selected representatives from among the notables of each area. He was in close contact with these representatives, and through these contacts, he kept close watch over the Shias. One of these representatives was an individual by the name of Ibrāhīm ibn 'Abdih, who had been selected by the Imam ('a) as the representative of Nayshābūr.

In a detailed letter addressed to Isḥāq ibn Ismā'īl and the Shias of Nayshābūr, the Imam ('a) first explained the role of the imamate in guiding the Muslim community, the necessity and importance of following the Imams ('a), and of being cautious from deviating from their instructions. He then wrote: "... Oh Isḥāq, you are my messenger to Ibrāhīm ibn 'Abdih, in order that he may act upon what I have written in the letter sent through Muḥammad Mūsā Nayshābūrī. You, and all those who are in your city, are duty-bound to act based upon this letter.

Ibrāhīm ibn 'Abdih is to read this letter for everyone, in order that no room is left for any question or

[113] Ṭabsī, Shaykh Muḥammad Jawād, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-'Askarī (a), First Edition, Qum, Daftare Tablighāte Islāmī, 1371 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 223-226.

uncertainty... May the greetings and abundant mercy of God be upon Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbdih, and upon you, and upon all of our followers. All of my followers, who reside in your city, who read this letter, and who have not deviated from the truth, must give over our monetary dues to Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbdih, and he must transfer this to Rāzī[114] or to an individual whom he introduces, and this is my order..."[115]

In this letter, in addition to establishing the collection of the monetary dues of the Shia (which played an integral role in strengthening their economic position overall), it is also understood that there was a hierarchy in regards to the representatives of the Imam (ʿa), and each one of them had his sphere of activity clearly defined. The gathered funds were given to the main representative and he, in turn, would deliver it to the Imam (ʿa).

The Imam (ʿa), perhaps in order to strengthen and establish the position of Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbdih, and also to clarify his sphere of activities, wrote the following in a letter to ʿAbdullah ibn Ḥamdiwīyah Bīhaqī: "I have appointed Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbdih for the collection of the monetary obligations of your city and region, and I have established him as my trustworthy representative amongst my followers. Be pious and be careful; pay your obligatory financial dues, for no individual is excused in not paying or in delaying their payment..."[116]

It is possible that some of the Shias had expressed doubt and uncertainty in regards to the authenticity of the

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[114] Apparently, Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq Rāzī is the individual meant by this; he was one of the notable personalities from amongst the Shia's of Ray (which is today a part of southern Tehran) and another one of Imam ʿAskarī's (a) representatives. Refer to: Ḥayāt al-Imām al-ʿAskarī (a), Shaykh Muḥammad Jawād Ṭabsī, p. 332.

[115] Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Marifat al-Rijāl, Mashhad, University of Mashhad, p. 575-580, Ḥadīth # 1088.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Second Edition, Tehran, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 219-323.

[116] Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Marifat al-Rijāl, Mashhad, University of Mashhad, p. 580, Ḥadīth 1089.

handwriting and letter of the Imam (ʿa) in regards to Ibrāhīm, and they had thought that the letter was possibly a fabrication. Therefore, the Imam (ʿa) had written the following in a separate letter: "The letter from me, regarding the appointment of Ibrāhīm for the collection of monetary dues... is indeed written in my own handwriting..."[117]

Another one of the Imam's (ʿa) representatives was Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq ibn ʿAbdullah Qummī Ashʿarī, one of his select companions and an elite personality from the Shias of Qum. Some of the scholars of Rijāl have mentioned him as being the liaison between the Imam (ʿa) and the people of Qum.[118] Other scholars have considered him as being one of the representatives of the Imam (ʿa).[119] From a tradition narrated in Biḥār al-'Anwār, it is understood that he was a representative of the Imam (ʿa) in regards to the endowments which existed in Qum.

Muḥammad ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī has written that: "Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq Qummī Ashʿarī, the teacher of Shaykh Ṣadūq, was the representative of Imam Abū Muḥammad ʿAskarī. When the Imam (ʿa) passed away, he took on the responsibility of becoming the representative of the Twelfth Imam (ʿa). The Imam (ʿa) would write letters to him, and he would collect the monetary dues from Qum and its surrounding areas, and have them delivered to the Imam (ʿa)."[120] Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq delivered 160 sacks of gold and silver, which he had received from the Shias of Qum, to the Imam (ʿa).[121] This is a small indication of the vast amount of wealth that was being collected and distributed.

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[117] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 580, Ḥadīth 1089.

[118] Najjāshī, Fihrīst Asmā' Muṣanfī al-Shīʿah, Qum, Maktabah al-Dāwarī, p. 66.
- Shaykh Ṭūsī, al-Fihrīst, Mashhad, Danishkadeye Ilāhīyāt va Maʿārife Islāmī, 1351 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 23.

[119] Ṭabsī, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-'Askarī (a), p. 333.

[120] Dalā'il al-Imāmah, Third Edition, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Rāḍī, 1363 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 272.

[121] Ṭabarsī, al-Iḥtijāj, Najaf, al-Ṭabʿat al-Murtaḍāwiya, 1350 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 257.

Ibrāhīm ibn Mahzīyār Ahwāzī was another representative of the Imam ('a). An amount of wealth had been collected by him from the public treasury, and he had not been successful in transferring this sum to Imam 'Askarī ('a). After the martyrdom of the Imam ('a), Ibrāhīm became ill and he willed that his son, Muḥammad, deliver that sum to the Twelfth Imam ('a). His son acted as he had been instructed, and was selected in the place of his father as the representative of the Imam ('a).[122]

At the head of the hierarchy from among the representatives of the Imam ('a) was Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān 'Amrī. It was through him that all of the other representatives were in contact with the Imam ('a). These representatives would collect the financial dues and turn them over to him, and he, in turn, would transfer them to the Twelfth Imam ('a).[123]

Couriers and Letters

In addition to the communication network, the Imam ('a) used a courier system to maintain contact with his followers. In this way, he would help resolve their various problems and difficulties. As an example, we can look at the activities of Abū al-'Adyān, one of the closest companions of the Imam ('a).[124] Abū al-'Adyān was encharged with delivering the letters and messages of the Imam ('a) to his followers. He would also take the letters, questions, khūms, and other financial dues of the Shias,

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[122] Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 351.
- Ṭabarsī, 'Ilām al-Warā Bi'Ilām al-Hūdā, Third Edition, Tehran, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, p. 445.

[123] Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Marifat al-Rijāl, Mashhad, Mashhad University, 1348 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 532, Ḥadīth 1015.
- Tastarī, Ibid, vol. 1, p. 315.

[124] Abū al-'Adyān 'Alī Baṣrī passed away towards the end of the third century Hijrī and his agnomen was actually Abū al-Ḥasan. He was famously known as Abū al-'Adyān for his debates with members of various religions and his subsequent and complete refutation of these individuals. The appointment of Abū al-'Adyān shows that the Imam (a) would choose select individuals for such duties.

and deliver them to the Imam ('a) in Sāmarrā'. His last duty, which was performed during the end of Imam 'Askarī's life, will be explained later in the section on the martyrdom of the Imam ('a).

Besides the courier network itself, the Imam ('a) used letters and correspondences to maintain contact with his followers, and these were used as a means of guiding them through the various problems which they were facing. An example of such correspondences is found in a letter which he wrote to Ibn Bābawīyah, which we will explore in more detail in the coming pages.[125] Besides this example, the Imam ('a) had written two letters to the Shias of Qum and Ābih (Āvih), whose contents have been preserved in our books,[126] as well as various other letters which are also present with us today.[127]

3- Secret Political Activities

Imam 'Askarī ('a), in spite of all the limitations and restrictions he was placed under by the 'Abbāsid government, still managed to lead a series of secret political activities, and concealed these from the government spies though a series of subtle methods and tactics. Since there are numerous examples of these activities, let us narrate just two of them below:

1- 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd 'Amrī was one of the closest and most confidential companions of Imam 'Askarī ('a).[128] He would use the pretense of selling oil to conceal his true activities.

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[125] Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Intishārāt 'Alāmah, vol. 4, p. 425.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 317.

[126] Fayḍ Kāshānī, Ibid, p. 264.
- Majlisī, Ibid, p. 317.

[127] Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Shu'bah, Tuḥaf al-'Uqūl, Second Edition, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmīya Lijamā'at al-Mudarisīn, 1363 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 486.

[128] 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd 'Amrī was later selected as the representative of the Twelfth Imam, during the period of his minor 'Ghaybah', when he was not directly active in the society.

When the Shias of Imam 'Askarī ('a) wished to give him their monetary dues, they would give them to 'Uthmān, who would conceal them in casks of oil, and through such means, deliver them to the Imam ('a).[129]

2- Dāwūd ibn Aswad was an individual who worked for the Imam ('a) and was in charge of stocking wood and heating the bath of the Imam's ('a) home. He has narrated: "One day, the Imam ('a) asked for me and gave me a piece of wood that was long, round, and thick, much like the bracket of a door. He said: 'Take this piece of wood and go give it to 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd.' I took the piece of wood and went on my way. Along the way, I encountered a water carrier, whose mule happened to block my path. The water carrier asked me to help move the animal; I used the piece of wood to hit the mule to get it to move. When I did this, the wood broke, and I noticed that there was a letter concealed inside. I quickly tucked the piece of wood under my arm and returned, while the water carrier yelled insults and curses at me (for having hit his mule with the stick)...

When I reached the Imam's ('a) home, 'Īsā, who also worked for the Imam ('a), greeted me by the door and said: 'Your master asks why you hit the mule and broke the piece of wood?' I replied: 'I did not know what was inside of it.' The Imam ('a) then said to me: 'Why did you do something where you were forced to apologize? Do not do such a thing ever again. Even if you hear someone slandering us, continue on your path and do not quarrel with him. We are passing our days in an evil city and region; just do your own work and know that the report of your actions reaches us.'"[130]

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[129] Shaykh Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, Tehran, Maktabah Naynawā al-Ḥadītha, p. 214.
- Ḥajj Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, Safīnat al-Biḥār, Tehran, Sanā'ī Bookstore, vol. 2, p. 158.

[130] Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib, Qum, Muṣṭafāwi Bookstore, vol. 4, p. 427.

4- Economic Support of the Shia

Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa) also helped to economically support the Shia, particularly his close and select companions. Through studying the life of the Imam (ʿa), it is clear that on some occasions, the companions of the Imam (ʿa) found themselves in financially difficult positions, and when they would tell the Imam (ʿa) of their situation, he would resolve their financial troubles. In some instances, he would resolve their problems even before they had asked anything of him. These initiatives of the Imam (ʿa) were designed as a preventative measure, so that these individuals who were in financial straits, would not become susceptible to being absorbed into the oppressive ʿAbbāsid system. There are several examples of such cases:

1- Abū Hāshim Jaʿfarī has narrated: "I was in a difficult financial situation, and I wanted to write of my situation to Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa), but i was too embarrassed, and so, I decided not to. One day, while I was at home, the Imam (ʿa) sent me 100 dinars, as well as a letter, where he had written: 'Whenever you need something, do not be embarrassed... Ask from us, in order that, through the will of God, you will reach your goals.'"[131]

2- ʿAlī ibn Zayd Alawī has narrated: "Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa) gave me a sum of money and said: 'With this money, buy a servant, for your servant has died.' When I returned home, I saw that my servant had passed away."[132]

3- Abū Hāshim Jaʿfarī has narrated: "I sent news of my financial situation to the Imam (ʿa). The Imam (ʿa) gave me a satchel containing approximately 500 dinars and said to

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[131] Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 343.
- Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Muʿassasat al-Intishārāt ʿAlāmah, vol. 4, p. 439.
- Masʿūdī, Ithbāt al-Waṣīyah, Fourth Edition, Najaf, al-Maṭbaʿat al-Ḥaydarīa, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 242.

[132] Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Muʿassasat al-Intishārāt ʿAlāmah, vol. 4, p. 431.
- ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā 'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 218.

me: 'Abū Hāshim, take this and if it is not enough, accept our apologies.'"[133]

4- One year, Abū Ṭāhir ibn Balāl left for the Ḥajj pilgrimage. While he was there, he witnessed 'Alī ibn Ja'far[134] giving away a considerable amount of money in the way of God. When he returned from the Ḥajj, he reported the incident to the Imam ('a). In reply, the Imam ('a) wrote: "Before, we had instructed that 100 dinars be given to him; then we instructed that this same amount be transferred to him once again, but he did not accept..." After this incident, 'Alī ibn Ja'far visited the Imam ('a), and according to the instructions of the Imam ('a), 30,000 dinars were transferred to him.[135]

This tradition shows that 'Alī ibn Ja'far would distribute large amounts of money in the Ḥijāz. Although the exact total has not been mentioned in the traditions, the large amount that has been mentioned shows that this was according to a well thought out and comprehensive program. The Shias who were in need, as well as the active individuals from among them, were supported thanks to this policy of the Imam ('a).

The large amount of money that was reportedly being distributed should not cause us to immediately reject the authenticity of such narrations. While the Imam ('a) was living under the tight control and restrictions of the 'Abbāsid government, his system of representatives were successful in delivering large amounts of money to him. For example, historical records state that: On one occasion,

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[133] Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Ibid, p. 431.
- 'Alī ibn 'Īsā 'Irbilī, Ibid, p. 218.

[134] 'Alī ibn Ja'far was one of the close and trusted companions of Imam Hādī (a) and Imam 'Askarī (a); in addition, he worked as an agent of these Imams. He was charged with being a representative of Imam Hādī (a) by Mutawakil 'Abbāsī, and spent a period of time in prison. After he was released, he went to Mecca on the instructions of the Imam (a) and took the city as his place of residence. It is possible that he was in Mecca at the time that Abū Ṭāhir saw him giving money in the way of God.
- Shaykh Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, Tehran, Maktabah Naynawā al-Ḥadītha, p. 212.

[135] Shaykh Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, Tehran, Maktabah Naynawā al-Ḥadītha, p. 212.

an individual from Gorgan visited the Imam ('a), and delivered the money of the Shias of that area to the Imam's agent.[136]

Another person from the region of Jabal, a mountainous part of Iran between the cities of Hamedan and Qazvīn, with the guidance of an Alawī individual, visited the Imam ('a), and delivered 4,000 dinars to him.[137] Another example is when the representative of the Imam in Qum, Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq, delivered 160 sacks of gold and silver, which he had collected from the residents of his city, to the Imam ('a).[138] There are records of other large sums of money, collected by the representatives of Imam 'Askarī ('a), which were delivered to the Twelfth Imam ('a) at the time of his father's martyrdom.[139] Other examples in history are the 700 dinars that were with one of the residents of Jabal,[140] as well as the 500 dinars that were with one of the Shias by the name of 'Imrān Hamdānī.[141] There is no question that large amounts of wealth were being transferred throughout the Shia world, and it was this economic lifeblood which allowed the Shias to survive and thrive in spite of the efforts of their enemies.

5- The Development of Political Strength and Influence

One of the most interesting aspects of Imam 'Askarī's ('a) political activities involve his support and fostering of important Shia figures. Since these elite individuals faced a higher level of pressure and difficulty, the Imam ('a) would guide and support each of them commensurate with their individual situation. He would give them guidance, in

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[136] 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 217.

[137] 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-'Irbilī, Ibid, p. 216.

[138] Ṭabarsī, Iḥtijāj, Najaf, al-Maṭba'at al-Murtaḍāwiya, 1350 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 257.

[139] Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 351.
- Ṭabarsī, 'Ilām al-Warā, Third Edition, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, p. 445.

[140] Ṭabarsī, Ibid, p. 448 and 449.

[141] Ṭabarsī, Ibid, p. 448 and 449.

order that their tolerance, patience, and awareness would increase in the face of the pressures and poverty that they were dealing with. All of this was in order that they could be well prepared in implementing their social, political, and religious duties.

Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn Maymūn has narrated: "I wrote a letter to Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa) complaining of my poverty. Later on though, after I had sent the letter, I said to myself, did not Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) say: 'Poverty with us, is better than affluence with others, and being killed with us, is better than remaining alive with our enemies.' After some time, the Imam (ʿa) wrote to me in response, saying: 'Whenever the sins of our friends go beyond a certain point, God entangles them in poverty and he overlooks a great deal of their sins as a result of this. As you said to yourself, poverty with us is better than affluence with others. We are a sanctuary for those who seek refuge with us, and we are for those who seek guidance from us, a light. We are the guardians of those who turn to us (for guidance). Whoever loves us, possesses a lofty rank (in nearness to God), and whoever is not a follower of our way will go towards the fire.'"[142]

Another example of this is a letter which Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa) wrote to ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn ibn Bābawīyah Qummī, one of the famous Shia jurisprudents. In this letter, after addressing some necessary issues, the Imam (ʿa) says: "Be patient and (actively) await the deliverance, for the Prophet (ṣ) has said: 'The most superior deed of my nation (Ummah) is awaiting the deliverance.' Our Shia will be associated with grief and sorrow until my son (the Twelfth Imam) appears. He is the same person whom the Prophet (ṣ) has given glad tidings that he will fill the earth with

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[142] Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Muʿassasat al-Intishārāt ʿAlāmah, vol. 4, p. 435.
- ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā al-'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 217.

justice and equity, just as it had been filled with oppression and tyranny. Oh my great and trusted jurisprudent, be patient and command my Shias towards patience. This earth (belongs) to God, and he will make the inheritors (ruler) whomever he wishes from amongst his servants. The future belongs only to the pious. May the greetings and mercy of God and his blessings be upon you and on all of the Shia."[143]

6- Widespread Use of the Knowledge of the Unseen

We know that the Imams ('a), due to their close connection with the creator of the universe, possessed knowledge of the unseen. When a situation arose wherein the foundations of Islam or the greater interests of the Muslim nation were in danger, they would use this knowledge as a tool in guiding the people. The reports and foretellings of the Imams ('a) are among the important aspects of their life history. One noteworthy point is that Imam 'Askarī ('a) manifested his knowledge of the unseen more than any of the other Imams ('a).

According to the research of one modern day scholar, Quṭb Rāwandī has mentioned 40 incidents of foretellings and miracles of Imam 'Askarī ('a) in his book Kharā'ij, Sayyid Baḥrānī has mentioned 134 incidents in his book Madinat al-Mu'ājiz, Shaykh Ḥurr 'Āmūlī has mentioned

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[143] Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Ibid, vol. 4, p. 425.

- Ḥajj Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, al-Anwār al-Bahīyah, Mashhad, Ja'farī Bookstore, p. 161.
- Tatmatul Muntahā, Second Print, Tehran, Markazī Bookstore, 1333 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 299 with some differences in wording.

Since the martyrdom of Imam 'Askarī (a) was in the year 260 Hijrī and the passing of 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn Bābawīyah was in the year 329 (meaning that it took place 69 years after the martyrdom of the Imam (a)), some have considered it unlikely that such a letter was written, particularly with the choice of words used in the original excerpt. This is because during that time, 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn was a young man of 20. It may be that, even during his youth, 'Alī was so highly ranked in virtue and character, that he would have been worthy of such mention by the Imam (Tārīkh al-Ghaybat al-Sughrā, Muḥammad al-Ṣadr, First Edition, Beirut, Dār al-Ta'āruf Lilmaṭbū'āt, 1392 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 196).

136 incidents in his Ithbāt al-Hudā, and ʿAllāmah Majlisī has mentioned 81 incidents in his Biḥār al-Anwār.[144] This shows the exceptional number of the foretellings and miracles which were reported from the Imam.

It seems that the reason behind these high numbers, which are much higher than any of the other Imams (ʿa), was due to the unfavorable conditions and straitened social situation that the Eleventh Imam (ʿa) and his father (Imam Hādī (ʿa)) lived under. From the time that Imam Hādī (ʿa) was forcibly brought to Sāmarrā', he was placed under strict control and restriction. The possibility of introducing his son, Imam Ḥasan (ʿa), to the general Shia public as the succeeding Imam, did not exist, and such an action would have put his life in severe jeopardy from the ruling government. For this reason, the introduction of Imam Ḥasan ʿAskarī (ʿa) and the calling of witnesses from among them, took place during the final months of Imam Hādī's (ʿa) life.[145] This took place in such a manner, that when the time of the Imam's (ʿa) martyrdom came, many of the Shia were still not aware of the imamate of Imam Ḥasan ʿAskarī (ʿa).[146]

Another factor during the life of Imam Hādī (ʿa) wa that a group of the Shia believed in the imamate of Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī, the brother of Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa). Based on their belief, this group would treat Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī with respect in front of Imam Hādī (ʿa), but Imam Hādī (ʿa) would dismiss their actions and guide them towards the imamate of his son Ḥasan (ʿa).

After the martyrdom of Imam Hādī (ʿa), a group of ignorant and treacherous individuals, such as Ibn Māhawīyah, began attempting to mislead people and deviate them from the imamate of Imam Ḥasan ʿAskarī

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[144] Ṭabsī, Shaykh Muḥammad Jawād, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-ʿAskarī (a), First Edition, Qum, Daftare Tablīghātī Islāmī, 1413 Hijrī Qamarī p. 121.

[145] Ṭabsī, Ibid, p. 217.

[146] Masʿūdī, Ithbāt al-Waṣīyah, Fourth Edition, Najaf, al-Maṭbaʿat al-Ḥaydarīa, 1374 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 234.

('a). These people worked in causing a level of doubt and uncertainty in a group of the Shia. As a result, some people even wished to test and examine the Imam ('a),[147] while others would engage in a series of correspondences with him.[148] These doubts and misgivings reached the point where the Imam ('a) responded to a group of the Shia with great vexation, saying: "No one from among my fathers ever encountered so much doubt and uncertainty from the Shia, in regards to the matter of the imamate..."[149]

Imam 'Askarī ('a), in order to remove these doubts and uncertainties, and at times to protect his companions from danger and raise their morale, found it necessary to remove the veils between himself and the unseen, in order to inform the people of occurrences in other parts of the world. This was a very effective way of strengthening the faith of the Shia and bringing back into the fold those who opposed him. Abū Hāshim Ja'farī, who we mentioned previously as being one of the closest companions of the Imam ('a), has said: "Whenever I would visit Imam 'Askarī ('a), I would witness a new proof and sign of his imamate."[150]

Now that the intentions of the Imam ('a) are clear in this matter, let us look at several examples of predictions which were foretold by Imam 'Askarī ('a):

1- Muḥammad ibn 'Alī Samarī, who was one of the closest companions of the Imam ('a), has narrated: "In a letter, Imam 'Askarī ('a) wrote to me: 'A test will come to pass for you, so be prepared.'

After three days, a dispute broke out amongst the Hāshimīs. I wrote to the Imam ('a) asking: 'Is this that same

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[147] Mas'ūdī, Ibid, p. 246.

[148] Mas'ūdī, Ibid, p. 238.

[149] Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Shu'bah, Tuḥaf al-'Uqūl, Second Edition, 1363 Hijrī Shamshi, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī Lijama'at al-Mudarisīn Biqum Mushariffah, p. 487.

[150] Ṭabarsī, 'Ilām al-Warā Bi'Ilām al-Hūdā, Third Edition, Tehran, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, p. 375.

sedition you mentioned?' He replied: 'This is not that. Be careful!' A few days later, Mu'tazz was killed."[151]

2- Approximately twenty days before the murder of Mu'tazz, the Imam ('a) wrote to Isḥāq ibn Ja'far Zubayrī, saying: "Stay in your home, for an important event is going to take place." Isḥāq recounts that: "After Barīḥah was killed, I wrote to the Imam ('a), asking: 'The event that you mentioned took place, now what should I do?' The Imam ('a) replied: 'The event that I mentioned is something else.' It was not long before Mu'tazz was killed."[152]

3- Muḥammad ibn Ḥamzah Sarawī has narrated: "I wrote a letter to Imam 'Askarī ('a) through the medium of Abū Hāshim Ja'farī, one of the close companions of the Imam ('a). In the letter, I wrote the Imam ('a) asking him to pray for me so that I could become wealthy. The Imam ('a) wrote back: 'Glad tidings be upon you. God will soon make you free of want. Your uncle's son, Yaḥyā ibn Ḥamzah, has passed away and he has no inheritors. His possessions, which amount to 100,000 dirhams, will soon reach your hands.'"[153]

4- Abū Hāshim Ja'farī has narrated: "I was imprisoned. I complained to the Imam ('a) about the pressures of jail and the heaviness of the iron collar and chains. The Imam ('a wrote back to me: 'Today, you will recite your noon praye in your own home.' It was not long after that I was released from prison and I ended up performing my prayers in my own home."[154]

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[151] 'Alī ibn 'Īsā 'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 207.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Second Edition, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 298.

[152] Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 340.
- Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Intishārāt 'Alāmah, vol. 4, p. 436.

[153] 'Alī ibn 'Īsā 'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 214.
- Shablanjī, Nūr al-Absār, Cairo, Maktabah Mashhad al-Ḥusaynī, p. 168.
- Ibn Ṣabbāgh Mālikī, al-Fuṣūl al-Muhimah, Old Print, p. 303.

[154] Ṭabarsī, 'Ilām al-Warā Bi'Ilām al-Hūdā, Third Edition, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah,

5- Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad narrates: "When Mohtadī, the ʿAbbāsid caliph, began to kill the Mawālī, I wrote a letter to Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa), saying: 'Thank God that the caliph has become preoccupied and does not have the opportunity of troubling you; I have heard that he was threatening you and that he has said: "I must remove them from the face of the earth."

The Imam (ʿa) responded in his own handwriting, saying: 'His lifespan will be shorter than to act upon these threats. Count onwards from today; on the sixth day, he will be killed in a state of wretchedness and dishonor.' Six days later, Mohtadī was killed in the same manner that the Imam (ʿa) had predicted."[155]

6- Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad Qalānsī has narrated: "My brother Muḥammad, whose wife was pregnant, wrote a letter to Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa), asking him to pray that his wife's pregnancy be safe from danger, and that the newborn child be a son. The Imam (ʿa) wrote in response: 'God is going to grant you a male child, and Muḥammad and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān are two good names.' His wife ended up giving birth to two sons who were twins, and they named one of them Muḥammad and the other ʿAbd al-Raḥmān."[156]

7- Muḥammad ibn ʿAyyāsh has narrated: "We were in a group of several people, and we were discussing the miracles of Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa). An individual who was a 'Naṣibī' (an enemy of the family of the Prophet) said: 'I am going to write a letter to him without ink; if he answers it, I will accept that he is on the path of truth.'

We wrote our own questions, and the Naṣibī wrote his question on a piece of paper without using ink (he traced

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p. 372.
-Masʿūdī, Ithbāt al-Waṣīyah, Najaf, al-Math'baatul Haydarīya, 1374 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 241.

[155] Ṭabarsī, ʿIlām al-Warā Biʿilām al-Hūdā, Third Edition, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, p. 372.
- Masʿūdī, Ibid, p. 262.

[156] Masʿūdī, Ibid, p. 241.

out what he was going to write without using any ink). We gathered all the letters and sent them to the Imam ('a). The Imam ('a) replied back with the answers to our questions and in response to the Naṣibī, he even wrote his name and the name of his father. When the Naṣibī saw this, he lost consciousness. When he came to, he testified to the truthfulness of the Imam ('a) and thereafter became a Shia."[157]

8- Ismā'īl ibn Muḥammad has narrated: "I sat by the door of the home of Imam 'Askarī ('a). When the Imam ('a) came out, I went forward and complained to him of my poverty; I also swore that I did not have even a single dirham left.

The Imam ('a) said: 'Do you swear, while you have hidden 200 dinars in the ground?' He then added: 'I did not say this in order that I do not give you anything'; he then turned to his servant and said: 'Give him what you have with you.' The servant gave me 100 dinars. I thanked God and turned to leave.

As I was about to leave, the Imam ('a) said to me: 'I fear that you will lose the 200 dinars at a time when you have a great need for them.' I went looking for the dinars and found them in the place where I had hidden them. I changed their location and hid them in a manner where no one was aware of their hiding place. Some time passed after this incident, when I came to need the money. I went to where I had hidden them, but I did not find anything, and this ended up costing me greatly. Later, I found out that my son had discovered the location of the money, and had taken them. I never did get them back, and the situation took place exactly as the Imam ('a) had predicted."[158]

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[157] Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Muṣṭafāwi Bookstore, vol. 4, p. 440.

[158] Ibn Ṣabbāgh Mālikī, al-Fuṣūl al-Muhimah, Old Print, p. 303.

- Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Ibid, p. 432.

- Shablanjī, Nūr al-Absār, Cairo, Maktabah Mashhad al-Ḥusaynī, p. 167. (with slight differences in wording)

9- An individual by the name of Ḥalabī narrates: "We had gathered in Sāmarrā', and we were waiting for Abū Muḥammad (Imam 'Askarī) to leave his house, so that we could see him from up close. It was at this time that we received a letter from the Imam ('a). In it, he had written: 'Be careful that no one greets me and that no one gestures towards me; otherwise, your lives will be in danger.'

At that time, there was a young man standing next to me, and I asked him where he was from. He replied that he was from Medina. I asked him: 'What are you doing here?' He said: 'A dispute has arisen in regards to the imamate of Abū Muḥammad, and I have come here in order to see him and hear him speak, or to see a sign from him, in order that my heart can be put at rest.' Then he revealed: 'I am from the grandchildren of Abū Dhar Ghiffari.'[159]

At this point, Imam Ḥasan ('a) came out of his home, along with his servant. When he reached us, he looked at the young man that was next to me, and said: 'Are you Ghiffārī?' The young man replied: 'Yes.' The Imam ('a) said: 'How is your mother Hamdawīya doing?' The youth replied: 'She is doing well.' After exchanging these few words, the Imam ('a) continued on his way. I turned to the young man and said: 'Had you ever seen him before?' He replied: 'No.' I then asked: 'Is this enough for you?' He said: 'Even less than this would have been enough.'"[160]

10- Ja'far ibn Muḥammad has narrated: "Imam 'Askarī ('a) was walking and we were accompanying him. I had a desire to have a child and in my heart, I said to myself: 'Oh Abā Muḥammad (Imam 'Askarī), will I come to have a child?' At that moment, Imam 'Askarī ('a) looked at me and indicated with his head that i would. Again, I said to myself: 'Will it be a son?' The Imam ('a) moved his head indicating that it would not be a boy. Some time later, God

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[159] Ghifār was the name of Abū Dhar's tribe.

[160] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Second Edition, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 269.

gave us a daughter."[161]

11- 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Zīyād has narrated: "A letter reached me from the Imam ('a) warning me that: 'A danger threatens you, do not leave your home.' During those days, I was faced with a problem which caused me a great deal of terror. I wrote a letter to the Imam ('a), asking: 'Was this the danger of which you forewarned?' The Imam replied: 'The danger that I mentioned will be worse than that.' Not long after, I became a wanted man due to Ja'far ibn Maḥmūd, and a 100,000 dirham bounty was placed on my head."[162]

7- Preparing the Shia for the Time of the 'Ghaybah'[163]

The disappearance of an Imam is, naturally, a strange and unfamiliar phenomenon. Therefore, understanding and dealing with such a situation is difficult for the followers. For this reason, the Prophet (ṣ) and the Imams ('a) gradually made the people familiar with this concept and prepared them for the time when it would take place. Since the time of the Ghaybah was moving closer, these efforts became noticeably more evident during the era of both Imam Hādī ('a) and Imam 'Askarī ('a). As we witnessed in the life of Imam Hādī ('a), the Imam would perform various actions through his representatives, and he had less direct contact with the people.

This way of doing things manifested itself even more during the time of Imam 'Askarī ('a). Although the Imam had declared the birth of Imam Mahdī ('a), he would only show him to select individuals from among the Shia. In addition, the contact of the people with the Imam ('a) was gradually reduced with the passing of each day. Even in the

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[161] Ṭabsī, Shaykh Muḥammad Jawād, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-'Askarī (a), First Edition, Qum, Daftare Tablīghāte Islāmī, 1371 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 136.

[162] 'Alī ibn 'Īsā 'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 207.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, vol. 50, p. 298.

[163] The period of time when the Imam would not be openly present in the society.

city of Sāmarrā', the Imam ('a) began to answer the questions and inquiries of the Shia through the use of letters and representatives. Through these means, he prepared the Shia for the conditions and responsibilities of the time when the Twelfth Imam would not be directly accessible to them. As we will see later on, this is the same method that the Twelfth Imam ('a) used during his minor Ghaybah, while he prepared the Shia for the period of the major Ghaybah. At the same time, some of the high ranking Shia were successful in seeing Imam Mahdī ('a). Let us take a look at one such event:

The Foretelling of Imam Mahdī's Ghaybah

Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq, one of the select companions of Imam 'Askarī ('a), narrates: "I came to visit Imam 'Askarī ('a), and I wished to ask about the Imam who would come after him. Before I could ask my question, he said: 'Oh Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq! God, from the time that he created Adam, until the Day of Resurrection, has never left, nor will he leave the earth empty of his Ḥujjah (proof). God, through the blessing of the existence of his Ḥujjah on earth, repels calamities from the people of this world, and he sends down rain, and he manifests the blessings concealed in the heart of the earth.' I asked: 'Who is the leader and Imam after you?' The Imam quickly rose and went into another room. It was not long before he returned, while carrying a boy who was about 3 years of age on his shoulders. The boy's face was luminous, much like the moon on its 14th night.

The Imam ('a) said: 'Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq, if you were not highly regarded before God and the Imams ('a), I would not have shown you my son. He is of the same name and title of the Prophet of God (ṣ). He will fill the earth with justice and equity, just as it had been filled with injustice and tyranny. He will be to this nation similar to Khidr and Dhul Qarnain (in regards to the length of his

disappearance); he will have an absence where many will fall into doubt. Only the people whom God has kept firmly on the belief of his imamate, and has given the grace of praying for his hastened rise and reappearance, will find safety from deviation..."[164]

A Light No One Can Deny

In spite of all the animosity that the 'Abbāsid government held towards the Imam ('a), his spiritual excellence and perfection would force them to show their respect towards him and to publicly praise him from time to time. 'Ubaydullah ibn Khāqān was one of the important government officials of the 'Abbāsid government. His son Aḥmad was in charge of managing the real estate and land property of Qum, and he was entrusted with the collection of the taxes of that city. He was also considered to be a Naṣibī, one who hated the Ahl al-Bayt ('a).

Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad Ash'arī and Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā have narrated that one day, in one of Aḥmad's gatherings, a discussion came about in regards to the Alawīs and their beliefs. Aḥmad said: "In Sāmarrā, I have seen no one like Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad (Imam 'Askarī) in terms of his gravity, modesty, nobility, virtue, and greatness from amongst his family and among all of the Hāshimīs. His family holds him in precedence over their elders and chiefs. He also holds this same position in the eyes of the military commanders, the viziers, and the people as a whole. I remember that one day I was with my father, when the doorman brought news that Abū Muḥammad, Ibn al-Riḍā[165] (Imam Ḥasan 'Askarī) wants to enter. My father, with a loud voice, said: 'Allow him to enter.' I became

[164] Ṣadūq, Kamālidīn, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī Lijamā'at al-Mudarisīn, 1405 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 384 (Bāb 38).

[165] After Imam Riḍā, in the society of that day and also in the Abbasid government, the succeeding Imams (meaning Imam Jawād (a), Imam Hādī (a), and Imam 'Askarī (a)) were all called Ibn al-Riḍā out of respect.

amazed that the doorman had mentioned him with respect and had used his agnomen in the presence of my father. This was because no one was called by his agnomen in front of my father besides the caliph, his successor, and those whom the caliph had ordered to be called by their agnomens."[166]

"At that point, a tan complexioned man, who possessed good stature and a pleasant face... (who was) youthful, and who manifested great dignity and majesty, entered. When my father saw him, he stood up and took several steps forward to greet him. I do not ever remember my father respecting any one of the Hāshimīs or the military commanders in such a manner. My father then put his hand over his neck and kissed his face and chest. He then took his hand and sat him in his own place of prayer, where he had been sitting. He then sat in front of him and began to talk with him. During the course of his speech, he would use the phrase 'may I be sacrificed for you.' I was completely amazed at what I was seeing.

Suddenly, the doorman came and said that Muwafaq 'Abbāsī (the brother of the caliph) had arrived and wanted to enter. It was customary that when Muwafaq arrived, the doormen and his select military commanders would come inside before him and form two columns from the entrance of the palace all the way up to the meeting room of my father, and they would remain in these two columns until Muwafaq had entered and walked through the assembly.

My father had all of his attention focused upon Abū Muḥammad (Imam 'Askarī) and was speaking with him, when he suddenly noticed the elite slaves of Muwafaq. At this time, he said: 'May I be sacrificed for you, you may leave if you are so inclined.' He then ordered for his doormen to escort him outside of the two lines, so that Muwafaq would not see him. At that point, Abū

[166] Amongst the Arabs, it was customary to call the people by their agnomen as a form of respect and honor.

Muḥammad stood up to leave, and my father also stood up (out of respect). My father then put his hand over Abū Muḥammad's shoulders and said goodbye to him; it was then that Abū Muḥammad left.

At seeing this whole incident unfold, I said to the doormen and the slaves of my father: 'That was incredible! Who was this individual that you called by his agnomen in front of my father and my father acted in such a way towards him?' They said: 'He is one of the Alawīs, by the name of Ḥasan ibn 'Alī, and he is famously known as Ibn al-Riḍā.' My surprise deepened, and during the course of that entire day, I was constantly thinking of my father's behavior with that man; I was occupied with these thoughts until nightfall.

It was my father's habit that, after the night prayer, he would sit down and study the important reports, which were necessary to bring to the caliph's attention. After he had prayed and taken his seat, I came and sat down in front of him. No one else was by him. He asked: 'Aḥmad, do you need something?' I said: 'Yes father, if you give me permission, I will tell you.' He said: 'You have permission. I said: 'Father, who was the man that I saw this morning, whom you treated with such humility and respect? When you were speaking with him, you kept saying to him, "May I be sacrificed for you," and you considered yourself, your father, and your mother to be worth sacrificing for him.' He said: 'My son, he is the Imam of the Rāfiḍīs,[167] Ḥasan ibn 'Alī, famously known as Ibn al-Riḍā.'

Then he became silent for a time. I, too, remained silent. After some time, he said: 'My son, if the caliphate leaves the hands of the 'Abbāsids, no one is worthy of it amongst the Hāshimīs but he. This is due to his virtue, modesty, asceticism, worship, high character, and worthiness; his father was also a great and virtuous man.'

[167] The enemies of the Shia call them Rāfiḍīs as a taunt.

When I heard these words, my worry increased even more, and my anger also increased towards my father. This matter became my greatest worry and grief, and I spent my time inquiring and investigating in regards to Ibn al-Riḍā. Everyone whom I asked, from the Hāshimīs, the heads of the military, writers, judges, jurisprudents, and other individuals, all considered him to be the pinnacle of greatness, and they all mentioned only good things about him and considered him superior over their own family members and elders. In this way, he became a towering figure in my eyes, for I did not see any friend or foe, but that they spoke well of him and praised him..."[168]

The Martyrdom of Imam ʿAskarī

Muʿtamid ʿAbbāsī was in constant fear of the spiritual influence of Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa) over the people and their love and respect for him. As time went on, he noticed that the Imam's (ʿa) influence was growing day by day. He also noticed that imprisonment and the other restrictions which he had placed upon him were yielding the opposite of the intended results. Therefore, he decided to resort to the old method which tyrants have always used in dealing with their opponents; he decided to poison the Imam (ʿa) and kill him.

The famous Shia scholar, Shaykh Ṭabarsī, has written: "Many of our scholars have mentioned that Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa) was killed by means of poison, and he died as a martyr. This was the same way that his father, grandfather, and in fact, all of the Imams before him had died. It is well known that none of the Imams (ʿa) died a natural death."[169] Kafʿamī, the famous Shia scholar, has narrated: "Muʿtamid

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[168] Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 338.
- Fattāl Nayshābūrī, Rawḍat al-Wāʿiẓīn, First Edition, Beirut, Muʿassat al-ʿAlamī Lil Maṭbūʿāt, 1406 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 273-275.
- Ṭabarsī, 'Ilām al-Warā Biʿllām al-Hūdā, Third Edition, Tehran, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, p. 376-377.

[169] 'Iʿlām al-Warā, Third Edition, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, p. 367.

poisoned him,"[170] and Muḥammad ibn Jarīr ibn Rustam, who was one of the Shia scholars of the fourth century, believes that: "Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa) reached the rank of martyrdom through being poisoned."[171]

One piece of evidence that the Imam (ʿa) reached martyrdom through the ʿAbbāsid government, is found in the unusual effort and actions of Muʿtamid ʿAbbāsī during the days when the Imam had been poisoned. These elaborate efforts by Muʿtamid were designed to show the people that the Imam (ʿa) had died a natural death and had not been poisoned.

Ibn Ṣabbāgh Malikī, one of the scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah, has narrated from ʿUbaydullah ibn Khāqān (one of the government officials of the ʿAbbāsids) that: "...When Abū Muḥammad Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ʿAskarī (ʿa) passed away, Muʿtamid's behavior changed, and this surprised us, since we did not think that he would act in such a way, seeing that he was the caliph and possessed great power. When Abū Muḥammad (Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa)) became ill, five of the select officials of the caliph, who were all government jurisprudents, were sent to his house. Muʿtamid ordered them to stay in Abū Muḥammad's home and report back on whatever took place; he also sent a group to attend to him as nurses. Likewise, he ordered Qāḍī ibn Bakhtīyār to select ten trustworthy individuals and send them to the house of Abū Muḥammad. These individuals were to go see the Imam (ʿa) every morning and evening and take note of his state. Two or three days later, they reported back to the caliph that Abū Muḥammad's condition had worsened, and that it was unlikely that he would get better.

The caliph ordered that they remain at the house day

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[170] Ḥajj Shaykh ʿAbbās Qummī, al-Anwār al-Bahīyah, Mashhad, Jaʿfarī Bookstore, p. 162.

[171] Dalā'īl al-Imāmah, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 223.

and night, and they continuously remained at that great man's home, until he passed away several days later. When news of his passing spread, the city of Sāmarrā' began to reach a state of commotion. Crying and wailing could be heard throughout the city, and the bazaar and individual shops were closed in mourning. The Hāshimīs, government officials, military commanders, judges, poets, witnesses, and the rest of the people all came out in droves in order to participate in the funeral procession. On that day, Sāmarrā' looked and felt like a scene from the Day of Judgment.

After the body was prepared for burial, the caliph sent his brother, 'Īsā ibn Mutawakil, to perform the funeral prayer over it. When they placed the body on the ground for prayer, 'Īsā went close to it and opened up the face covering. He showed the face to the Alawīs, the 'Abbāsids, judges, and writers and said: 'This is Abū Muḥammad 'Askarī who died a natural death, and these servants of the caliph also bear witness.' Then he covered the face of the Imam and prayed over him; he then ordered that they take the body for burial..."[172] Naturally, this prayer was more of a ceremonial prayer and it was designed to help cover up the fact that the Imam ('a) had been killed by the Abbasids. Among Shia scholars, it is famously known that Imam Mahdī ('a) privately prayed over the body of his father, Imam 'Askarī ('a).[173]

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[172] Al-Fuṣūl al-Muhhimah, Old Edition, p. 307-308. This incident has been narrated by the late Shaykh Mufīd in his Irshād, by Fattāl Nayshābūrī in his Rawḍat al-Wā'īẓīn, by Ṭabarsī in his 'I'lām al-Warā, and by 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-'Irbilī; all of them narrated it from Aḥmad the son of 'Ubaydullah ibn Khāqān. This report shows what sort of a position the Imam (a) held in that society and why the Abbasid government was so fearful of him. It also makes clear as to how far the caliph was willing to go, in order to conceal the fact that the Imam (a) had been poisoned.

[173] Ṣadūq, Kamālidīn, Qum, Mu'assese al-Nashr al-Islāmī, Lijamā'at al-Mudarisīn Biqum al-Musharifah, 1405 Hijrī Qamarī, Bāb 43, p. 475.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Second Edition, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 332-333.

The Futile Efforts of Ja'far Kadhāb (Ja'far the Liar)

Abū al-'Adyān has narrated: "I was one of the workers of Imam 'Askarī ('a) and I would deliver the Imam's ('a) letters to various cities. When he became ill (the same illness of which he would later pass away), I came to visit him. The Imam ('a) wrote some letters and said: 'You will take these to Madaen, and you will not be in Sāmarrā' for 15 days. On the 15th day, when you enter the city, you will hear wailing coming from my house and (see that) they have put my body in the place for the ceremonial washing.'

I said: 'Oh my master, if such a thing happens, then who will be the next Imam?' He said: 'Whoever prays over my body is the Qā'im after me.' I asked him for another sign. He said: 'Whoever is the one who gives news of what is in the money belt is the Imam after me.' The greatness and gravity of the Imam ('a) prevented me from asking what he meant by what was in the belt.'

I took the Imam's ('a) letters to Madaen and received their answers. On the 15th day, I entered Sāmarrā' and I saw that the situation was exactly as the Imam ('a) had described, and the sound of wailing was coming from the home of the Imam ('a). I also saw his brother, Ja'far (Kadhāb), sitting next to the home of the Imam ('a); a group of the Shia had gathered around him and they were giving him their condolences, and congratulating him on his succession to the imamate.

I was taken aback at this sight and said to myself: 'If Ja'far is the Imam, then the situation of the imamate has changed, for I have seen with my own eyes Ja'far drinking wine, gambling, and playing the tar and tambourine. I also went forward and gave him my condolences on the passing of his brother, and congratulated him on his imamate, but he did not ask me anything. Then 'Aqīd, a worker in the Imam's home, came outside and said to Ja'far: 'They have shrouded the body of your brother; come and pray over it.' Ja'far entered the house. The Shia were around him, and

Sammān[174] and Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī (who is popularly known as Salamah) were in front of them.

When we entered the courtyard of the home, they had shrouded the body of Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa) and placed it on a bier. Jaʿfar went forward so that he could perform the funeral prayers. As he was about to start the prayer, unexpectedly, a dark-haired and tan-complexioned child came forward and took hold of Jaʿfar's clothing. He pulled him aside and said: 'Uncle, move aside; I must pray over my father.' Jaʿfar moved aside but his face showed the signs of his anger. The child prayed over the body of the Imam (ʿa), and they buried the Imam (ʿa) in his home, next to the grave of his father, Imam Hādī (ʿa).

Then, the child turned towards me and said: 'Oh man from Baṣrah, give me the reply of the letters that you have with you.' I told him in regards to the letters and I said to myself: 'These were two of the signs (praying over the body and inquiring of the letters), now all that remains is the sign of the money belt.' Then I went towards Jaʿfar and noticed that he was complaining over what had taken place. Ḥājiz Washā', who was present at that time, asked Jaʿfar: 'Who was that child?' He wished to condemn Jaʿfar, who had made false claims towards the imamate, by means of this question. Jaʿfar said: 'By God, I had never seen him before and I do not know who he is!'

At that point, we were sitting down, when a group of people from Qum arrived and asked about Imam Ḥasan ʿAskarī (ʿa). When they found out that he had passed away, they asked: 'Who is the Imam's (ʿa) successor?' The people who were present indicated that Jaʿfar was the successor. They gave their greetings to Jaʿfar, condoled him, and congratulated him. Then they said: 'We have brought some letters and some money. Tell us which individuals have

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[174] This individual is ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd ʿAmrī, one of the close companions of Imam ʿAskarī (a). Due to his occupation of selling oil, he was known as Sammān, the oil seller.

written the letters and what amount the money is.' Ja'far became agitated at this question, rose up, and while he was brushing the dust off of his clothing, said: 'These people expect us to have knowledge of the unseen.' At that moment, a servant came out of the house and said: 'The letters are from such and such individuals, and in the purse there are one thousand dinars, out of which, ten are gold plated.' The representatives of Qum handed over the letters and the purse, and said to the servant: 'Whomever has sent you to take the money belt is the Imam...'"[175]

A Fruitless Undertaking

Mu'tamid 'Abbāsī assumed that he had reached his goal through the killing of Imam 'Askarī ('a), and that no other danger threatened his government. Still, in order to be 100 percent certain that the Imam ('a) had not left a successor. he decided to investigate matters further. He encharged number of his agents to enter the house of the Imam ('a and search all of his belongings. Afterwards they were to stamp and seal them.

In addition, because he had heard that Imam 'Askarī ('a) had a child, he ordered that a group of midwives examine the wives and female servants of the Imam ('a). If they were to find anything indicating a pregnancy, they were to report back immediately. It has been narrated that one of the midwives became suspicious towards one of the female servants of the Imam ('a). As a result, the caliph ordered that the servant be placed under watch, and Naḥrīr, one of the special government agents of the caliph, alongside a group of women, were to keep watch over her. They were to see whether the suspicion had been well founded or not.[176] That female servant was kept under

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[175] Ṣadūq, Kamālidīn, Qum, Mu'assasah al-Nashr al-Islāmī, Lijamā'at al-Mudarisīn Biqum al-Musharafa, 1405 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 475.

[176] Kulaynī, Ūṣūl al-Kāfī, Tehran, Maktabah Ṣadūq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 505. - Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Second Edition, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī

watch for a period of two years, but she did not deliver a child and so the report was found to have been false.[177]

At this point, Mu'tamid decided to do certain things in order to show the public that Imam 'Askarī ('a) had not had any children; through these means, he wanted to make the Shias hopeless of a successor to the Imam ('a). For this reason, the caliph ended up ordering that the inheritance of the Imam ('a) be divided between his mother and brother (Ja'far), which would signify that there was no other heir.[178] In spite of this, the Shia still believed that the Imam ('a) had a child, and they also believed that this child had taken on the responsibilities of the imamate.[179] This belief was fueled by the fact that a number of them had seen the son of the Imam ('a) themselves; many examples of this are found in the books of history.

In spite of these efforts by the caliph, the pressure and careful watch continued over the family of the Imam, in order to discover the whereabouts of the Twelfth Imam ('a). This continued until the revolt of Ya'qūb ibn Layth Ṣafārī in Khurāsān, and the sudden death of 'Ubaydullah ibn Yaḥyā ibn Khāqān, as well as the disturbance and sedition of Sāḥib al-Zanj in Baṣrah. These events forced the 'Abbāsids to gather all of their forces against the rebels, and they were not able to continue their harassment of the family of the Imam.[180]

Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 329.

[177] Kulaynī, Ibid, p. 505.

- Majlisī, Ibid, p. 329.

[178] Kulaynī, Ibid, p. 505.

- Majlisī, Ibid, p. 329.

[179] 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 199.

- Fattāl Nayshābūrī, Rawḍat al-Wā'iẓīn, First Edition, Beirut, Mu'assasat al-A'lamī Lilmaṭbū'āt, 1406 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 276.

[180] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Third Edition, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 331.

- Muḥammad ibn Jarīr ibn Rustam Ṭabarī, Third Edition, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Rāḍī, 1363 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 224.

- Ṣadūq, Kamālidīn, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī Lijamā'at al-Mudarisīn, 1405 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 475.

The Twelfth Imam

Imam al-Mahdī

A Brief Look at the Life of Imam Mahdī

The Twelfth leader, Imam Ḥujjah ibn al-Ḥasan al-Mahdī, was born on the 15th of the month of Sha'bān, in the year 255 Hijrī, in the city of Sāmarrā'.[181] He has the same name and agnomen (Abū al-Qāsim) as the Prophet of Islam (ṣ).[182] The Imams ('a) have refrained from mentioning his primary name,[183] but the titles of the Imam ('a) include: al-Ḥujjah, al-Qā'im, Khalf Ṣāliḥ, Ṣāḥib al-Zamān,[184] and Baqīyatallah.[185] Yet the most famous of these is that of the Mahdī ('a).[186] His father was the Eleventh leader of the Shia, Imam Ḥasan 'Askarī ('a), and his mother was the honorable lady Narjīs,[187] who has also been mentioned by the names of Rayḥānah, Sūsan, and Ṣaqīl.[188] The degree of

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[181] Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 346.
- Fattāl Nayshābūrī, Rawḍat al-Wā'iẓīn, First Edition, Beirut, Mu'assat al-'Alamī Lil Maṭbū'āt, 1406 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 272.

[182] Shaykh Mufīd, Ibid, p. 346.

[183] Ṣadūq, Ibid, p. 648.
- Kulaynī, Ibid, p. 332.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1393 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 51, p. 31-34. A question remains as to whether the lack of mentioning the main name of the Imam (a) was due to political reasons specific to the time of the minor disappearance or whether his name was not mentioned out of respect until the time arrives for his reappearance and revolution. There are differences of opinion in this matter among the Shia scholars. (Refer to: Ḥajj Mīrzā Ḥusayn Ṭabarsī Nuri, al-Najm al-Ṭāqib, Tehran, Intishārate 'Ilmīye al-Islāmīya, Bāb 2, p. 48 and 49).

[184] Ṭabarsī, Ibid, p. 418.
- Ibn Ṣabbāgh, Ibid, p. 310.

[185] Mas'ūdī, Ithbāt al-Waṣīyah, Fourth Edition, Najaf, al-Maṭba'at Haydarīya, 1374 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 248.

[186] Ibn Ṣabbāgh, Ibid, p. 310.

[187] Shaykh Mufīd, Ibid, p. 346; Ṣadūq, Ibid, p. 432; Ṭabarsī, Ibid, p. 418.

[188] Ṣadūq, Ibid, p. 432; also refer to: Rawḍat al-Wā'iẓīn, p. 292.
Some contemporary researchers have considered it possible that her name was Narjis, and the other names, except for Ṣaqīl, were given to her by Ḥākīmah, the daughter of Imam Jawād (a) (some traditions mention that she had been the slave of

the virtue and spirituality of the lady Narjīs Khātūn was considered to be so high, that Ḥakimah, the daughter of Imam Hādī ('a), who was herself a very lofty individual, considered her as being the master from among her family, and considered herself the servant of the lady Narjis.[189]

Imam Mahdī ('a) has two distinct periods of Ghaybah: one of these periods, called Ghaybat al-Sughrā, was short in duration, while the latter period, which is longer and still ongoing, is known as the Ghaybat al-Kubrā. The first period began from the time of his birth until the era of the 'Select Representatives,' while the second began from the end of the first, and will continue until the time of his reappearance and revolution.[190]

The Birth of Imam Mahdī According to the Ahl al-Sunnah

The belief in the coming of a savior is not exclusive to only the Shia; it is a belief founded upon numerous traditions from the Holy Prophet (ṣ), and, as such, the scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah have also accepted this matter. Differences do exist and these lie primarily in the fact that the Ahl al-Sunnah reject the birth of Imam Mahdī ('a) and say: "The individual whom the Prophet of Islam (ṣ) has spoken of, who will revolt after a period of disappearance, has not yet been born and will be born in the future."[191] In spite of this, a considerable number of Sunni historians and narrators have mentioned the birth of the Imam ('a) in their texts and consider it to be a historical fact. Some researchers have recorded over 100

Ḥākimah). The people of that time would call their slaves by a variety of names... and Narjīs, Rayḥānah, and Sūsan are all the names of flowers.

[189] Fattāl Nayshābūrī, Ibid, p. 283.
- Ṣadūq, Ibid, p. 427.
- Majlisī, Ibid, vol. 51, p. 12.

[190] Shaykh Mufīd, Ibid, p. 346.

[191] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah, Cairo, Dār Aḥyā' al-Kītāb al-'Arabīya, 1960 A.D., vol. 7, p. 94, and vol. 10, p. 96.

such individuals.[192]

Seeing Imam Mahdī

As mentioned previously in some detail, the ʿAbbāsid government desired very greatly to find the son of Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa) and kill him. In order to achieve their aims, the government watched the Imam (ʿa) and his family, and placed them under very tight restrictions. Therefore, the birth of Imam Mahdī (ʿa) took place in great secrecy, through a very systematic and meticulously planned program, and it was also hidden from the people, including even many of the Shia.

The most well documented report on this subject comes from Ḥakīmah, the aunt of Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa), who personally witnessed the birth of Imam Mahdī (ʿa). However, it must be kept in mind that the secrecy surrounding Imam Mahdī (ʿa) does not mean that no one saw him during the first five or six years of his life, when his father was still alive. As we mentioned previously, certain select individuals from among the Shia were able to meet the Imam (ʿa) during various occasions. This was allowed in order that they could find certainty in the birth and existence of the Twelfth Imam (ʿa), and in due time inform the rest of the Shia about it.

Our scholars have mentioned these meetings in some detail,[193] and out of these many meetings, the most

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[192] Faqīh Īmānī, Mahdī, Mahdī Muntaẓar in the Nahj al-Balāghah, Iṣfihān, The Public Library of Amīr al-Mu'minīn (a), p. 23 and 39.

A number of these sources, which clearly mention the birth of Imam Mahdī (a) are listed below:

- Ibn Ḥajar Haytamī, al-Ṣawāʿiq al-Muḥriqah, Second Edition, Cairo, 1375 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 208.
- Shabrāwī, al-'Itiḥāf Biḥubb al-'Ashrāf, Second Edition, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Rāḍī, 1363 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 179.
- Muḥammad Amīn Baghdādī Suwaydī, Sabā'ik al-Dhahab Fī Maʿrifat Qabā'il al-ʿArab, Beirut Dār Ṣaʿab, p. 78.

[193] Ṣadūq, Ibid, p. 434-478.

- Shaykh Mufīd, Ibid, p. 350 and 351.
- Shaykh Sulaymān Qandūzī, Yanābīʿ al-Muwaddah, Beirut, Mu'assasat al-ʿAlamī Lilmaṭbūʿāt, vol. 3, p. 123-125.

important seems to be one in which forty individuals met with the Twelfth Imam ('a). The account of this meeting is given by Ḥasan ibn Ayūb ibn Nūḥ,[194] who has narrated: "We went to Imam 'Askarī's ('a) home in order to ask about the next Imam. In that gathering, there were forty people present. 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd 'Amrī, who would become one of the future representatives of Imam Mahdī ('a), stood up and asked: 'I wish to ask you of a matter in which you are more knowledgeable than I.'

The Imam ('a) asked him to sit down. 'Uthmān became distressed and wanted to leave the gathering. The Imam ('a) said: 'No one should leave this gathering.' No one left, and some time passed. Then, the Imam ('a) called 'Uthmān, and 'Uthmān stood up. Imam 'Askarī ('a) said: 'Do you wish for me to tell you the reason you have come here?' Everyone replied in unison: 'Yes please.' He then said: 'You have come here in order to ask about the Ḥujjah and the Imam who will come after me.' At this point, a young boy entered the gathering who was radiant, much like the moon, and who was the closest of the people in appearance to Imam 'Askarī ('a). The Imam ('a) indicated towards him and said: 'This is your Imam after me, and my successor amongst you. Obey his commands, and do not differ after me, for if you do, you will be destroyed and your religion will be corrupted...'"[195]

The Political and Social Reasons for the Ghaybah

There is no doubt that the leadership of divinely appointed leaders exists for the purpose of guiding people towards human perfection. It also goes without saying, that this is only possible when the people have the proper preparation and foundation to benefit from this divine guidance. If such groundwork does not exist amongst the

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[194] As was mentioned in the life history of Imam Hādī (a), Ayūb ibn Nūḥ was one of the representatives of the Imam.

[195] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 204.

people, the mere existence of these divine leaders among them will not have much effect.

Unfortunately, the pressures and restrictions that were brought to bear on the Imams ('a), and in particular on Imam Jawād ('a) and the Imams that came after him, showed that a favorable atmosphere did not exist in the society. The time was not yet right for the people to fully benefit from the guidance and leadership of the Imams. Due to this environment, divine wisdom dictated that the Twelfth Imam ('a) should disappear from the direct view of the society, until the time came that the society would be ready for his reappearance.

It must also be mentioned that while the lack of readiness by the people can be considered to be the main reason, not all of the reasons for the disappearance are necessarily known to us. In the traditions on the disappearance of the Imam ('a), there are three main points which are considered foundational. Let us take a look at each of these points:

A- A Test for the People

One of the established ways of God is his examinatior and testing of his servants, in order to see who is truly faithful and sincere. Life is filled with a multitude of various tests, and through these tests, it becomes clear who obeys God through times of hardship, and who does not. In addition, these tests become the means of forging various religious attributes and characteristics that manifest themselves and allow individuals to reach a higher level of perfection.

Due to the Ghaybah of Imam Mahdī ('a), the people are placed under an examination and test. The people who do not possess firmly established faith, will have this inner reality manifested externally, by means of this examination. Those who possess strong faith, due to awaiting the reappearance and experiencing various hardships and

struggles, will become more experienced and capable, and this will allow them to be more worthy of receiving higher levels of divine reward.

Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far ('a) has said: "At the time that my fifth descendent disappears, be careful of your religion. May it not be that someone takes you away from your religion. He will, of necessity, have a disappearance in such a manner that a group from the faithful will turn back from their beliefs. God will test his servants through means of this disappearance."[196]

From the words of the Imams ('a), it is narrated that the examination that will arise from the disappearance of the Imam ('a) will be one of the hardest of the divine examinations.[197] This difficulty will be experienced from two different angles:

1- The actual period of the disappearance will be so long in duration that many of the people will become afflicted with doubts and uncertainties. Others will develop doubts about the birth of the Imam ('a) and others in regards to the length of his lifespan. Only people who are sincere and of deep understanding will remain faithful to their beliefs in the imamate of Imam Mahdī ('a). The Prophet of Islam (ṣ), during the course of a long tradition, has said: "The Mahdī ('a) will disappear from the view of the Shia and his followers, and except for those whom God has made their hearts worthy in terms of faith, the people will not remain steadfast in their faith in his imamate."[198]

2- The hardships, difficulties, and unfavorable occurrences that will take place during the period of the Ghaybah will transform the people in such a way that protecting one's faith and being steadfast in one's religion will become something of extreme difficulty and the faith of the people

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[196] Shaykh Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 204; Nu'mānī, al-Ghaybah, Tehran, Maktabah Ṣadūq, p. 154.
[197] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 203-207; Ṣāfī, Ibid, Bāb 47, p. 314 and 315.
[198] Ṣāfī, Ibid, Section 1, Bāb 8, p. 101, Ḥadīth 4.

will be placed in great peril.[199]

B- The Protection of the Life of the Imam

God, through the Ghaybah, has protected the life of the Twelfth Imam ('a). If the Imam ('a) was openly visible to the people from the beginning of his life, then it is very clear that he would have been killed, as we have mentioned in previous pages. If he were to have reappeared later, during a similarly unfavorable time, he would also have been killed, and therefore been unable to perform his divinely appointed mission. Zurārah, one of the companions of Imam Ṣādiq ('a), has narrated: "Imam Ṣādiq ('a) said: 'The awaited Imam ('a) will be hidden from the eyes for a period of time before the time of his rising.' When Zurārah asked why, the Imam ('a) said: 'He will be afraid for his life.'"[200]

C- Freedom from Pledging to the Oppressors

The Twelfth Imam ('a) has not, nor will he ever, officially recognize any government, even out of a sense of 'Taqīyah.' In accordance to his duties, he is going to establish God's government in its totality, without the use of any veils, fear of the oppressors, or other considerations. Therefore, there is no room for any pledges or oaths.

Ḥasan ibn Faḍāl has narrated: "The Eighth Imam ('a) said: 'It is as if I see my Shia at the time of the death of my third descendent (Imam Ḥasan 'Askarī), searching everywhere for their Imam ('a), but not finding him.' I asked: 'Why will he disappear?' The Imam ('a) said: 'In order that when he rises with the sword, he will have no one's pledge upon his shoulders.'"[201]

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[199] Ayatollah Ṣāfī, Luṭfullāh, Navīd Amno Amān, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, p. 177 and 178.

[200] Kulaynī, Ibid, vol. 1, p. 337; Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 202; Ṣadūq, Ibid, p. 481; Ṣāfī, Muntakhab al-'Athar, Section 2, Bāb 28, p. 269; Nu'mānī, Ibid, p. 166.

[201] Ṣadūq, Kamālidīn, Bāb 44, p. 480, Ḥadīth 4; Majlisī, Ibid, vol. 51, p. 152; Ṣāfī,

The Minor and Major Ghaybah

As mentioned previously, the Ghaybah of Imam Mahdī ('a) can be divided into two distinct periods: the minor Ghaybah and the major Ghaybah.

The minor Ghaybah began from the year 260 Hijrī (the year of Imam 'Askarī's martyrdom) and continued until the year 329 Hijrī (the year when the last select representative of Imam Mahdī passed away)— this period was sixty nine years in duration.[202] During the period of the minor Ghaybah, the connection of the Shia with the Imam ('a) was not completely broken, and they had contact with him, albeit in a limited way.

During this time, certain individuals, who will be named in the coming pages, were in contact with Imam Mahdī ('a) as his select representatives. Through them, the Shia would forward various questions and issues, and receive their answers. In some cases, they were even able to meet the Imam ('a) in person. Therefore, it can be said that the Imam ('a) was present in the society in certain ways, while not being present in the society in other ways.

This period can be considered as a time when the Shia were being prepared for the era of the Major Ghaybah. During the Major Ghaybah, even this limited contact was going to be broken and the Shia would be duty bound to seek the solutions to their questions and problems from the general representatives of the Imam ('a), namely the

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Muntakhab al-'Athar, Section 2, Bāb 25, p. 268, Ḥadīth 3.

[202] The late Shaykh Mufīd has considered the beginning of the period of the minor Ghaybah to have begun from the birth of Imam Mahdī (a) (255 Hijrī). (Al-'Irshād, p. 346). If this is the case, then the period of the minor Ghaybah was 75 years in duration. Shaykh Mufīd has counted this period as such, due to the fact that Imam Mahdī (a) was not present amongst the people from the time of his birth and did not have much contact with them; therefore, this period can be counted as having been part of the Ghaybah.

It is based on similar deliberations that other researchers, such as: Ṭabarsī, Sayyid Muḥsin Amīn, and Ayatollah Sayyid al-Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Ṣadr have also considered the period of the minor Ghaybah to have begun from the Imam's (a) birth (I'lām al-Warā, p. 444; A'yān al-Shī'ah, Beirut, Dār al-Ta'aruf Lilmaṭbū'āt, vol. 2, p. 46; al-Mahdī, Beirut, Dār Zahrā', 1398 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 181).

Mujtahids who are fully versed in Islamic law.

If the major Ghaybah was to have taken place suddenly and unexpectedly, then it is very possible that it would have caused many people to deviate. Through the medium of the minor Ghaybah, the people were gradually prepared for what was to take place, until the time came for the major Ghaybah. In addition, the connection of the select representatives to the Imam ('a) and also the visitation of certain Shias with Imam Mahdī ('a) helped to further solidify and establish the matter of the birth and existence of the Imam ('a).[203] With the ending of the minor Ghaybah, the period of the major Ghaybah began and it has continued until today, and will continue until the time that God gives permission for the rise and revolution of the Imam.

Moreover, the two part Ghaybah of Imam Mahdī ('a) was prophesized by previous Imams ('a), years before his birth. From that time onward, these traditions have been narrated and recorded in various books of tradition. Let us take a look at several of these traditions below:

1- Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a) has said: "Our hidden (Imam) will have two periods of absence, one of which will be longer than the other. During his period of absence, only those people who possess persistent certainty and complete insight will remain faithful to their belief in his imamate."[204]

2- Imam Bāqir ('a) has said: "The Qā'im Imam will have two (periods) of absence; in one of them it will be said that he has died..."[205]

3- Abū Baṣīr has said: "I said to Imam Ṣādiq ('a) that Imam Bāqir ('a) had narrated: 'The Qā'im of the family of

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[203] Ṣadr , Sayyid al-Ṣadr al-Dīn, Al-Mahdī (a), Beirut, Dār Zahrā', 1398 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 183.
- The Twelfth Leader- Imam Zamān (a), Mu'asseseye Dar Rāhe Ḥaq, p. 38.

[204] Shaykh Sulaymān Qandūzī, Yanābī' al-Muwaddah, Beirut, Mu'assasat al-'Alamī Lilmaṭbū'āt, vol. 3, Bāb 71, p. 82.

[205] Nu'mānī, Ibid, p. 173.

Muḥammad will have two periods of absence; one of them will be longer than the other.' Imam Ṣādiq ('a) said: 'Yes, it is so...'"[206]

4- Imam Ṣādiq ('a) has said: "The Qā'im Imam ('a) shall have two periods of absence: one of them short in duration and the other, long..."[207]

Select Representatives[208]

During the period of his minor Ghaybah, Imam Mahdī ('a) had four select representatives. These four individuals had been companions of the previous Imams ('a), and they were considered as learned and worthy scholars. They are famously known as the 'Four Deputies.' They are listed in chronological order as follows:

1- Abū 'Amr 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd 'Amrī
2- Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd 'Amrī
3- Abū al-Qāsim Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ Nawbakhtī
4- Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Muḥammad Samarī

It should also be mentioned that Imam Mahdī ('a) did have other representatives who were located in various regions besides these four. These other representatives were located in cities such as: Baghdad, Kūfah, Ahwāz, Ḥamidān, Qum, Ray, Azarbaijan, and Nayshābūr... These representatives were either in contact with the Imam ('a) through the four main representatives[209] (who were situated at the highest level of the hierarchy) and had various

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[206] Nu'mānī, Ibid, p. 173.

[207] Nu'mānī, Ibid, p. 170. Also refer to: Muntakhab al-'Athar, Section 2, Bāb 26, p. 251-253.

[208] During that time period, instead of the words deputy or representative, the words ambassador were more widely in use.

[209] According to Shaykh Ṭūsī, there were approximately ten individuals in Baghdad who were engaged as representatives by Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān (al-Ghaybah, p. 225).

Tawqīʿ[210] issued for them,[211] or, as some researchers have thought possible, the representation of these four was general in nature, while other individuals possessed representation in specific matters.[212] These representatives included individuals such as: Muḥammad ibn Jaʿfar Asadī, Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq Ashʿarī Qummī, Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad Ḥamidānī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥamzah ibn Ilyas,[213] Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Mahzīyār,[214] Ḥājiz ibn Yazīd, Muḥammad ibn Ṣālīḥ,[215] Abū Hāshim Dāwūd ibn Qāsim Jaʿfarī, Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Bilāl, ʿUmar Ahwāzī, and Abū Muḥammad Wajnāʾī.[216]

1- Abū ʿAmr ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd ʿAmrī

ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd belonged to the Banī Asad tribe, and since he lived in the city of Sāmarrāʾ, he was also known as ʿAskarī. Amongst the gatherings of the Shia, he was known as Sammān, the oil seller. The reason behind this name was that ʿUthmān would engage in certain secret activities, such as collecting money from the Shia related to the Imam (ʿa), which he would then deliver under the cover of selling oil. He would conceal the money he had collected in the containers of oil and then deliver them to the Imam (ʿa), thereby bypassing government suspicion and scrutiny.[217] In the society, ʿUthmān was regarded with respect and trust by the Shia masses.[218] It is worth mentioning that ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd had previously been a representative and trusted

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[210] The term Tawqīʿ, in the lexicon of the Shia scholars, is taken to mean the letters and instructions that were issued from the Imam (a) to the Shia, during the time of the minor Ghaybah.

[211] Ṣadr, Al-Mahdī (a), p. 189.

[212] Amīn, Sayyid Muḥsin, Aʿyān al-Shīʿah, vol. 2, p. 48.

[213] Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, p. 257 and 258.

[214] Kulaynī, Ūṣūl al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 518, Ḥadīth 5.

[215] Kulaynī, Ibid, p. 521, Ḥadīth 14 and 15.

[216] Ṭabarsī, ʾIlām al-Warā, p. 444.

[217] Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, Tehran, Maktabah Naynawā al-Ḥadīthah, p. 214.

[218] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 216.

companion of Imam Hādī ('a) and Imam 'Askarī ('a). Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq, who was himself one of the famous personalities of the Shia, has narrated: "One day I went to see Imam Hādī ('a) and said: 'I am sometimes away and sometimes here in the city, but even when I am present, I am not always able to visit you. Whose words should I accept and whose commands should I obey?'

The Imam ('a) said: 'Abū 'Amr ('Uthmān ibn Sa'īd 'Amrī) is an individual who is reliable and trusted by me; whatever he says to you, he is saying on my behalf, and whatever he sends to you, he has sent on my behalf.'"

Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq has also narrated: "After the passing of Imam Hādī ('a), I went to visit Imam 'Askarī ('a), and I repeated the same question. The Imam ('a), just like his father, said: 'Abū 'Amr was considered reliable and trustworthy by the previous Imam, and he is also considered trustworthy by me, both during my life, as well as after my death. Whatever he tells you, he is telling you on my behalf, and whatever he sends to you, he is sending to you on my behalf.'"[219]

After the passing of Imam 'Askarī ('a), the rites of the Ghusl, Kafan, and burial of the Imam ('a) were apparently performed by 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd.[220] One day in the midst of a gathering of the Shia, an incident took place whereby he collected an amount of money from a group of the Yemenī Shias, in accordance with Imam 'Askarī's ('a) instructions and as his representative. In response to what the people mentioned about the growing respect and confidence of the Imam ('a) in 'Uthmān, he ('a) said: "Witness that 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd is my representative, and his son Muḥammad, will also be the representative of my son Mahdī ('a)."[221]

Similarly, as we mentioned in the earlier part of this

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[219] Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, p. 215.

[220] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 216.

[221] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 216.

section, when the visit of the forty individuals with Imam Mahdī ('a) came to an end, the Imam ('a) addressed the people who were present, saying: "Whatever 'Uthmān (Ibn Sa'īd) says, accept it from him; be obedient to his commands and accept his words, (for) he is the representative of your Imam ('a) and the judgment is with him."[222] The date of 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd's passing is not clear. Some scholars have mentioned that he passed away sometime between the years 260 and 267 Hijrī, while others have mentioned the year 280 Hijrī.[223]

2- Muhammad ibn 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd 'Amrī

Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān was, much like his father, a learned scholar who was known for his piety, justice, and magnanimity. He was accepted and trusted by the Shia,[224] and was also one of the trustworthy companions of Imam 'Askarī ('a). He was, in fact, so trusted by the Imam ('a), that in the response to a question by Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq, asking whom he should refer to, he replied: "'Amrī ('Uthmān ibn Sa'īd) and his son; both are reliable and trusted by me. Whatever they send to you, they have sent it on my behalf, and whatever they say to you, they have said it on my behalf. Hear their words and follow them, for these two individuals are subject to my trust...."[225]

After the passing of 'Uthmān, a Tawqī' was issued from Imam Mahdī ('a) to Muḥammad, giving his condolences for the passing of his father and announcing his position as the next deputy.[226] 'Abdullah ibn Ja'far Ḥimyarī has narrated: "When 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd passed away, a letter arrived with the same handwriting that the Imam ('a)

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[222] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 217.

[223] Doctor Ḥusayn, Jāsim, The Political History of the Ghaybah of the Twelfth Imam, translated by Doctor Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī Ayatollāhī, First Print, Tehran, Mu'assasaye Intishārāte Amīr Kabīr, 1367 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 155 and 156.

[224] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 221.

[225] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 219.

[226] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 219-220.

would previously write to us in, appointing Abū Ja'far (Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd) to the position of his father."[227] Similarly, the Imam ('a) wrote the following in a Tawqī' that he created in response to the questions of Isḥāq ibn Ya'qūb: "May God be satisfied and pleased with 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd, and his father... He is trusted by me, and his writing (can be considered) as my writing."[228]

Abū Ja'far had also compiled some books on jurisprudence, and after his passing, these came into the possession of Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ, the third representative of the Imam ('a). According to some researchers, however, the book came into the possession of the fourth representative, Abū al-Ḥasan Samarī.[229]

Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān was the Imam's ('a) representative for a period of forty years. During this time, he organized and managed local and regional representatives, and was, as a whole, occupied with managing the overall affairs of the Shia. Numerous Tawqī's were issued by the Imam ('a) during his time and they were passed on to others through him. He passed away in the year 304 or 305 Hijrī.[230] An interesting historical note is that Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān, foretold the date of his own death, and he passed away exactly on the date that he had mentioned.[231]

3- Abū al-Qāsim Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ Nawbakhtī

During the last days of the life of Abū Ja'far, a group of the Shia notables went to visit him. He said: "After I have

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[227] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 220; Biḥār al-'Anwār, vol. 51, p. 349.

[228] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 220.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, vol. 51, p. 350.
- Ṭabarsī, 'Ilām al-Warā, Third Edition, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, p. 452.
- 'Alī ibn 'Īsā 'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 322.

[229] Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, p. 221.

[230] Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, p. 223.

[231] Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, p. 222; Biḥār al-'Anwār, vol. 51, p. 351.

passed away, in accordance to the Imam's order, Abū al-Qāsim Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ Nawbakhtī will be my successor and his representative. Refer to him and trust him in your affairs."[232] Indeed, Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ was one of the close assistants of the second representative, and ʿAmrī had worked from past times to stabilize and strengthen the position of his representation. He would refer the Shias to him for the collection of their dues, and he was a liaison between ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd and the Shia.[233]

Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ had compiled a book on Shia jurisprudence by the name of Al-Ta'dīb, and he had this book sent to the jurisprudents of Qum in order to see their opinion in regards to it. After some research and review, the jurisprudents wrote in response: "Except for one issue, it is all in accordance to the rulings of the Shia jurisprudents."[234] Some of his contemporaries praised him for his intelligence and insight, and said: "According to both the opinion of friend and foe, Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ is one of the most learned people of this age."[235] During the rule of Muqtadīr, the ʿAbbāsid caliph, Nawbakhtī was imprisoned for a period of five years, before finally being freed in 317 Hijrī.[236] After 21 years of representing the Imam (ʿa), he passed away in the year 326 Hijrī.[237]

4- Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Muhammad Samarī

In accordance with the command of the Twelfth Imam (ʿa),[238] and with the testament of Nawbakhtī and his introduction, ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad Samarī was selected to the position of the fourth representative of the Imam (ʿa),

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[232] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 226 and 227; Biḥār al-'Anwār, vol. 51, p. 355.

[233] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 224, 225, and 227.

[234] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 240.

[235] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, vol. 51, p. 356. Also refer to: Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 236.

[236] Doctor Ḥusayn, Jāsim, The Political History of the Ghaybah of the Twelfth Imam, First Print, Tehran, Amīr Kabīr Publications, 1367 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 199.

[237] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 238.

[238] Ṭabarsī, Ibid, p. 445.

and became responsible for managing the overall affairs of the Shia.[239] Samarī happened to be one of the companions of Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa).[240] Until the year 329 Hijrī when he passed away, he was entrusted with the representation of Imam Mahdī (ʿa). A few days before his death, a Tawqīʿ was issued by the Imam (ʿa) to him, saying:

"In the name of God, the Gracious, the Merciful. Oh ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad Samarī, may God bestow upon your brothers a great reward in the grief of your passing. You will pass away in six days. Set your affairs in order and do not appoint anyone as your successor. The time of the complete Ghaybah has arrived, and I will not reappear except with the permission of God, the exalted, and my reappearance will be after a lengthy period of time, when the hearts have become hard and the earth has become filled with oppression. Some from among my Shia will claim to have seen me (in the sense that they are my representatives). Be aware that whoever makes such a claim before the departure of the 'Sufyānī' and the 'voice from the sky,'[241] is a liar, and no movement or power is possible without God..."[242]

Six days after the Tawqīʿ was issued, Abū al-Ḥasan Samarī passed away.[243] Before his passing, he was asked: "Who is the representative after you?" He replied: "I do not have the permission to introduce anyone."[244] With the passing of Abū al-Ḥasan Samarī, a new era began in the

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[239] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 242.

[240] Ṣadr, Ibid, p. 412.

[241] As mentioned in the section on the signs of the 'Reappearance', the rise of an individual by the name of Sufyānī and a voice from the sky are two of the signs signaling the reappearance of the Imam (a).

[242] Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, p. 242 and 243.
-Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, vol. 51, p. 361.

[243] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 243.

[244] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 424.

history of the Shia, which is known as the era of the major Ghaybah. In the coming pages we will go into further detail about this era.

The Main Duties and Activities of the Select Representatives

The selection of these four deputies by the Twelfth Imam (ʿa) was in reality a continuation and expansion of the system of representatives established by the earlier Imams. This system was established by the Ninth Imam (ʿa), and later expanded upon during the time of Imam Hādī (ʿa) and Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa), and it reached its peak during the time of Imam Mahdī (ʿa). The main duties and activities of these select representatives can summarized as follows:

A- Keeping the Name and Location of the Imam a Secret

The possibility of seeing Imam Mahdī (ʿa) was present for his representatives, as well as certain individuals from among the Shia during the time of the minor Ghaybah. Thus, from time to time, certain visitations and meeting would take place.[245] In spite of this, due to the politic situation of the time, each of the four representatives wa duty bound to conceal the name and location of the Imam (ʿa) from the public. If such a thing was not done, the life of the Imam (ʿa) would have been put in danger from the government of that time. This policy of concealment was shaped and guided directly by the Imam (ʿa) himself.

One day, a Tawqīʿ was issued to Muḥammad ibn ʿUthmān (the second representative), stating: "For those who ask in regards to my name, they should know that if they are silent, heaven awaits them, and if they say anything, then hell awaits them. For if they become aware

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[245] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 222 and 246.

- Ṣadūq, Kamālidīn, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī Lijamāʿat al-Mudarisīn, 1405 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 44.

of my name, they will disclose it, and if they become aware of my location, they will reveal it."[246] This was while the Imam ('a) was not asked about anything related to this matter.

Similarly, one day 'Abdullah ibn Ja'far Ḥamīrī and Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq Ash'arī, who were both notable Shia personalities and close companions of the Imams, visited 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd and asked him: "Have you seen the successor of Imam 'Askarī ('a)?" He answered in the affirmative. They then asked the name of the Imam ('a). He refrained from telling them the Imam's ('a) name and said:

"It is unlawful for you to ask about this matter, and I am not telling you this on my own behalf, for I do not have the authority to make the lawful, unlawful and the unlawful, lawful; this is by his (the Imam's) own order. The 'Abbāsid government believes that Imam 'Askarī ('a) passed away without leaving a child, and for this reason, they divided his inheritance among people who were not his inheritors (such as Ja'far Kadhāb and the mother of Imam 'Askarī). This issue was met with the silence of the Imam ('a). At this point, nobody dares to establish relations with his family or to ask them anything. And if the name of the Imam ('a) is revealed, he will be pursued. Be cautious, keep God in mind, and refrain from these discussions."[247]

During the time of Abū al-Qāsim Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ's representation, it was asked from Abū Sahl Nawbakhtī, one of the notables of the Shia, how he had not been selected to this position as a deputy, while Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ had? He answered with the following: "Those who selected him to this position know best. My job is debating with the enemies and the opponents. If I knew the location of the Imam ('a) like Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ, and I was perhaps placed under pressure, I would disclose it; but if the Imam ('a) was hidden under the very cloak of Abū al-Qāsim, he would

[246] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 222.

[247] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 146 and 219.

never disclose it, even if he was being cut into pieces."[248]

B- Organizing the Representatives

During the era of the minor Ghaybah, the local representatives of the Imam ('a) each had their own jurisdiction and spheres of activity, and they were positioned in various areas where the Shia were found in large numbers. During the time of the Tenth and Eleventh Imams, although these representatives would normally contact the Imam ('a) through a main representative, the possibility of direct contact with the Imam ('a) did exist. During the time of the minor Ghaybah, this possibility of direct contact for the local representatives was cut off completely, and these representatives[249] were limited solely to the supervision of the Imam's ('a) select representatives. Under the supervision of these representatives, they fulfilled various duties, such as collecting the monetary dues of the Shia, as well as collecting letters and questions. These were all then delivered to the Imam ('a) by way of the select representatives. During the time of Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān, there were 10 individuals in Baghdad alone, who were working under his leadership.[250]

When the people gave their monetary dues to the select representatives, they would not receive receipts, but they would demand receipts when they turned over money to local or regional representatives. According to a narration of Shaykh Ṭūsī, towards the end of the life of Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān, an individual would give his monetary dues to Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ and seek a receipt from him in return. Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ complained of this matter, and so Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān instructed that a receipt should

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[248] Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, p. 240.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, vol. 51, p. 359.

[249] The Late Ṭabarsī has compiled an interesting index of this group of representatives. (I'lām al-Warā, p. 454).

[250] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 225.

not be sought from him and further added: "Whatever reaches the hands of Abū al-Qāsim, has reached my hands."[251]

C- Collecting and Distributing Wealth

The select representatives, during each of their respective periods, would directly or indirectly (through the local representatives) collect the monetary dues related to the Imam ('a) and deliver them in any way possible to him. In certain cases where the Imam ('a) had instructed, they would spend or distribute this wealth themselves.

During the time of Imam 'Askarī's ('a) martyrdom, a group of Shias from Qum and other regions of Iran entered Sāmarrā' and became aware that the Imam ('a) had passed away. This group had brought an amount of money from the Shias of their region, in order that they could deliver this to the Imam ('a). When they asked about the successor of Imam 'Askarī ('a), some people referred them to Ja'far (Kadhāb), the Imam's brother. According to the prevailing custom, they asked Ja'far to describe the specifics of the money and wealth they had brought with them. This method was meant to ascertain whether he possessed the knowledge of the Imams ('a). When Ja'far was unable to answer, they refrained from turning over the wealth, and without knowing what else to do, they decided to leave Sāmarrā' and return to their country.

When they reached the outskirts of Sāmarrā', a secret messenger of Imam Mahdī ('a) arrived and guided them towards a meeting with the Imam ('a). The Imam ('a) then told them the exact specifics of the wealth they had in their possession, and so they turned this wealth over to him. The Imam ('a) then added: "After this, do not bring anything to Sāmarrā'. I will specify an individual in Baghdad and you will give him the wealth and a Tawqī' will be issued by

[251] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 225 and 226.

him."[252] It was after this that the Imam ('a) designated 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd as his select representative and he began his duties in the city of Baghdad.

D- Answering Jurisprudential and Ideological Questions

The sphere of the activities of the four representatives was not limited only to the things mentioned above. Their activities also included answering the jurisprudential and religious questions of the Shia, as well as resolving various issues that their opponents would raise, in order to weaken the intellectual and ideological integrity of the Shia. The select representatives would perform these duties in the best manner possible, with the knowledge and training that they had received from the Imam ('a). A passing glance at the history of these four great ambassadors of the Imam ('a) shows us various facets into their various struggles and successes.

Using a variety of means, these representatives would combat and neutralize the whispers of doubt in regards to the existence of the Imam ('a). In some cases, they would reveal certain instances of their secret meetings with him,[253] and at other times, a Tawqī' would be issued from the Imam ('a) to help them in this affair.[254]

Moreover, they would deliver the jurisprudential and religious questions of the Shia to the Imam ('a), and bring his replies back to the people. One example of this is a Tawqī' issued through Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān, which responded to the various questions of Isḥāq ibn Ya'qūb.[255] Likewise, there is another example of a detailed Tawqī' issued in response to the questions of the representative of

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[252] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 225, and 226.

[253] Ṣadūq, Kamālidīn, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī Lijamā'at al-Mudarisīn, 1405 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 440-441.

[254] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 176-177.

[255] Ṭabarsī, Ibid, p. 452-453.

the people of Qum, Muḥammad ibn 'Abdullah ibn Ja'far Ḥamīrī.[256]

In addition, there were certain times when the select representatives would hold debates with their opponents, soundly defeating them. Throughout the course of these debates, they would emphasize the fact that they had learned their answers from Imam Mahdī ('a), and it was not from themselves. In one debate, Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ extensively answered the doubt of an individual in regards to the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn ('a). On the day after this debate, Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ said to one of the Shias who had assumed that the answer to that particular question had been from himself: "If I were to fall from the skies and become food for the animals, or if a strong wind was to throw me to some far off region, this would be better in my opinion, than if I was to give my own personal opinions on the religion of God. The matter that you heard yesterday was heard from the 'Ḥujjah of God.'"[257]

Likewise, there was an instance when some questions were asked from one of the leading theologians of the time. These questions were regarding the cause of Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far's ('a) martyrdom, and whether the infallible leaders were killed with the sword or through the use of poison, and also the secret of the superiority of Fāṭimah ('a) over the other daughters of the Prophet (ṣ). Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ gave some very clear and definitive answers to these questions, resulting in the admiration of the scholar who had first asked them. The scholar said: "I have never heard an answer on this matter, better or more concise."[258]

E- Struggles against the False Claimants

Included among the activities of the four deputies was fighting the Ghulāt (extremists), as well as the false

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[256] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 229-236.

[257] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 198-199.

[258] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 238-239.

claimants to the office of the deputyship. As explained in the chapter on the life of Imam Hādī ('a), a group of deviated and position-seeking individuals crafted some ideas about the divinity of the Imams ('a), and through this, they were able to claim certain positions for themselves and collect wealth from the people in the name of the Imam ('a). This issue hurt the reputation of the Shia and caused problems for the Imams ('a).

During the time of the minor Ghaybah, in addition to these issues, certain individuals appeared who claimed that they were the select representatives and ambassadors of the Imam ('a). They began to take possession of money that was the trust of the Imam ('a) and they would issue deviant opinions in religious and jurisprudential matters. It was here that the select representatives, under the guidance of the Imam ('a), stood up against them, and sometimes a Tawqī was issued from the Imam ('a) condemning and rejecting them. Among these people were Abū Muḥammad Sharī'ī, Muḥammad ibn Naṣīr Numayrī, Aḥmad ibn Hilāl Karkhī, Abū Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Bilāl, Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr Ḥallaj, and Muḥammad ibn 'Alī Shalmaqānī.[259]

Shalmaqānī was at one point considered a Shia jurisprudent, and he had even compiled a book by the name of Taklīf. Later, he became inclined towards extremism and deviation, and began to speak words of disbelief. For example, he emphasized a belief in the transmigration of souls, saying: "The soul of the Prophet of Islam (ṣ) is in the body of Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān (the second representative), and the soul of Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a) is in the body of Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ (the third representative), and the soul of Fāṭimah ('a) is in the body of Umm Kulthūm, the daughter of Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān.

[259] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 244.

Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ spoke against this ideology as a type of disbelief and atheism, and likened it to the Christian views on Prophet Jesus (ʿa). Through his words and actions, Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ caused Shalmaqānī to be disgraced and ostracized amongst his people. When Shalmaqānī refused to desist, a Tawqīʿ being issued through Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ in Dhī al-Ḥijjah of the year 312 Hijrī, cursing him and declaring him an apostate. As a result, he was killed in the year 323 Hijrī.[260]

The Major Ghaybah

With the passing of the fourth select representative of Imam Mahdī (ʿa), the era of the minor Ghaybah came to end and the era of the major Ghaybah began. During this period, the scholars who possess the necessary qualifications are considered as the general representatives of the Imam (ʿa). As mentioned before, the select representation took place when the Imam (ʿa) would specifically announce someone by name as his representative. On the other hand, a general representation takes place when the Imam (ʿa) has defined the conditions and overall characteristics of his representative, and then through time, whoever comes to possess these qualifications and standards will be known as his representative. Through these means, these individuals would be considered as the authority (Marja) of the Shia in religious and worldly affairs.

The Infallible Imams (ʿa), and in particular, Imam Mahdī (ʿa), have narrated numerous traditions defining these qualifications, and they have charged the Muslims, during the era of the major Ghaybah, to refer to the

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[260] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 248-254; Also refer to: Doctor Ḥusayn, Jāsim, The Political History of the Ghaybah of the Twelfth Imam, translated by Doctor Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī Ayatollāhī, First Print, Tehran, Mu'assase Intishārāt Amīr Kabīr, 1367 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 200-205.

- Masʿūdī has mentioned his death as having taken place in 322 Hijrī (Tanbīyah wa al-'Ishrāf, Cairo, Dār al-Ṣāwī Lil Ṭab, p. 343.)

'possessors of these qualifications' and act upon their orders. Let us take a look at a few of these traditions:

1- 'Umar ibn Ḥanẓalah has narrated: "I asked Imam Ṣādiq ('a) that if a dispute breaks out between two individuals from among the Shia based on an issue of inheritance or a loan, and they refer to the government and (state) judges, is this act permissible? The Imam ('a) said: 'Whoever refers to them in a matter of Ḥaq and Bāṭil has in reality referred to the Tāghūt, and whatever he gets due to their ruling, he has received in an unlawful manner, however much it may have been his right, for he has received it based on a ruling of the Tāghūt[261] whom God has commanded for them to not accept and to reject, for he says: Their (real) wish is to resort together for judgment (in their disputes) to the evil one, though they were ordered to reject him.' [262]

I then asked: 'Then what must they do?' He said: 'They must look and see which individual amongst you narrates our traditions, issues opinions in the matter of our Ḥalāl and Ḥarām and has mastered it, and has comprehende our rules and regulations. They must accept him as the judge, for I have appointed him as a judge over you. If ḥ. judges based upon our rules and someone does not accept this from him, then they have considered the rule of God as being insignificant and they have rejected us. Whoever rejects us, has (in reality) rejected God and this is the station of associating (others) with God, the Almighty...'"[263]

This order of Imam Ṣādiq ('a) is in reality a general ruling, and it includes all jurisprudents who possess the necessary qualifications. When the Imam ('a) is not willing to leave even a personal dispute to the judgment of the

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[261] The Tāghūt is an individual who rules contrary to the truth and who is not worthy of the position of rule from a religious perspective.

[262] Surah Nisā', Verse 60.

[263] Kulaynī, Ūṣūl al-Kāfī, Tehran, Maktabah al-Ṣadūq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 67, Ḥadīth 10.

- Shaykh Hurr 'Āmūlī, Wasā'il al-Shī'ah, Beirut, Dār Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, vol. 18, Bāb 11, p. 99.

Tāghūt's government, then it is certain that he is not willing to leave the rest of the affairs of the Muslims under the control of the oppressors either, and that he has entrusted the management of the affairs of the Muslims to the just Shia jurisprudents.

2- Isḥāq ibn Yaʿqūb has narrated: "I requested Muḥammad ibn ʿUthmān (the second representative of Imam Mahdī (ʿa)) to forward my letter to the Imam (ʿa). In that letter, I had asked in regards to a difficult issue which I had. The Imam (ʿa) responded to the letter in his own handwriting. Among my questions was one where I asked who we should refer to during the time of the Ghaybah, when any issue arises. The Imam (ʿa) responded to this question in the following manner: 'And on the issues which will arise, refer to the narrators of our traditions. They are my proof over you, and I am the proof of God (over you).'"[264] Although Isḥāq ibn Yaʿqūb had asked about his particular responsibility, the Imam (ʿa) answered him in a comprehensive manner and defined the responsibilities of all the Shia.

Imam Mahdī through Shia Sources

Numerous traditions have been narrated from the Prophet (ṣ) and each of the Imams (ʿa) in regards to the birth, Ghaybah, reappearance, global revolution, as well as other details about Imam Mahdī (ʿa). Years before his birth, many of the characteristics and particularities of Imam Mahdī (ʿa) were foretold; these foretellings include- that he will be from the descendants of the Prophet, he will be of the descendants of Fāṭimah, he will be from the lineage of Imam Ḥusayn, and that he will fill the earth with justice through his global revolution. There are only a few subjects

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[264] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 177.
- Ṭabarsī, Ibid, p. 452.
- Shaykh Hurr ʿĀmūlī, Ibid, vol. 18, p. 101, The Book of Judgement, The Section On The Characteristics of a Judge, Bāb 11, Ḥadīth 9.

which have so many related traditions as this one.

First, let us look at the number of traditions narrated from the Imams (ʿa) about Imam Mahdī (ʿa), and then we will review the books written by the scholars in regards to him. Afterwards, we will look at the traditions narrated from the Prophet of Islam (ṣ), through the books of tradition (Ṣiḥaḥ) of the Ahl al-Sunnah, as well as other books written about Imam Mahdī (ʿa) by Sunni scholars.

It is worth mentioning here, that, although the respective times of all the Imams (ʿa) had their own particularities, and that the Imams (ʿa) were naturally focused on the critical issues of their day, in spite of these issues, the subject of Imam Mahdī (ʿa) was something which they all spoke about. In various times and places, the Imams (ʿa) would speak about Imam Mahdī (ʿa), and there are numerous traditions from each of them on this subject. For example, there are:

1- 51 traditions from Imam ʿAlī
2- 5 traditions from Imam Ḥasan
3- 14 traditions from Imam Ḥusayn
4- 11 traditions from Imam Zayn al-ʿAbidīn
5- 63 traditions from Imam Bāqir
6- 124 traditions from Imam Ṣādiq
7- 6 traditions from Imam Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar
8- 19 traditions from Imam Riḍā
9- 6 traditions from Imam Jawād
10- 6 traditions from Imam Hādī
11- 22 traditions from Imam Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī[265]

Let us take a look at a few of these traditions in greater detail:

A- Amīr al-Mu'minīn (ʿa) has narrated that: "The Prophet of Islam (ṣ) said- 'The world will not come to an end until

[265] Amīnī, Ibrāhīm, The One Who Will Administer Justice Throughout The World, Fourth Print, Qum, Dār al-Fikr Publications, 1352 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 74-82. These numbers have been obtained through narrations from the book Muntakhab al-'Athar; with further research, the number of traditions will naturally be more.

a man from the lineage of Ḥusayn (ʿa) takes control of the affairs of my nation and fills the world with justice, just as it had been filled with oppression.'"[266]

In addition, the Nahj al-Balāghah is filled with the words of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) on this subject.[267] For example, he is quoted as saying: "The world is much like an unruly camel that does not allow anyone to drink its milk (and goes towards its own child instead). After this unruliness, it will then incline towards us.[268] God has said: 'And we desired to show favor to those who were abased in the land, and to make them imams, and to make them the heirs.'"[269]
B- Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī (ʿa) has said: "If there is only one day left in the existence of this earth, God will lengthen that day in order that a man from my lineage will revolt and fill the world with justice and equity, much like it had been filled with oppression and tyranny. I heard the Prophet of God (ṣ) saying this."[270]
C- Imam Jawād (ʿa) is quoted as saying to ʿAbdul ʿAẓīm Ḥasanī: "Our Qā'im is the Mahdī Muntaẓar (ʿa), who must be awaited during the time of his Ghaybah and must be obeyed during the time of his reappearance. He will be my third descendent. I swear by the Lord who appointed Muḥammad to prophethood and who made the imamate particular to our family, that if there is only one day left in the life of this world, God will lengthen that day in duration until the Mahdī reappears and fills the earth with justice and equity, just as it had been filled with oppression and tyranny before. God will accomplish his work in one night, much like he accomplished the work of Mūsā, the

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[266] Muḥammad ibn Jarīr ibn Rustam Ṭabarī, Dalā'il al-'Imāmah, Third Edition, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Rāḍī, p. 240.

[267] Refer to: Mahdī Faqīh Īmānī, Mahdī Muntaẓar in the Nahj al-Balāghah, Iṣfihān, The Amīr al-Mu'minīn Public Library.

[268] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah, Cairo, Dār Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1960 A.D., vol. 19, p. 29, Wisdom 205.

[269] Surah Qaṣaṣ, Verse 6.

[270] Ṣadūq, Kamālidīn, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī Lijamā'at al-Mudarisīn, 1405 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 318.

'Kalīmallah': He went to bring a firebrand for his wife, but he returned with the rank of prophethood." Imam Jawād ('a) then added: "The most superior action of our Shia is the awaiting of his reappearance and revolution."[271]

Books Compiled about Imam Mahdī before His Birth

The matter of the Ghaybah and revolution of Imam Mahdī ('a) is such a definitive and proven matter in Islam that numerous books were compiled on this subject long before his birth ever took place. For example, the book al-Mashīkhah was written 100 years before the major Ghaybah took place, and it narrated many traditions regarding the Ghaybah of Imam Mahdī ('a).[272] The late Ṭabarsī has written: "The Shia narrators of tradition, during the time of Imam Bāqir ('a) and Imam Ṣādiq ('a), compiled traditions on the Ghaybah in book format."[273]

Similarly, some of the companions of the Imams ('a) have written books on Imam Mahdī ('a) and his revolution. These include individuals such as: Ibrāhīm ibn Ṣāliḥ Anmāṭī[274] (a companion of Imam Bāqir), Ḥasan ib Muḥammad ibn Samā'ah[275] (a companion of Imam Mūs ibn Ja'far), Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn Jumhūr[276] (a companion of Imam Riḍā), 'Alī ibn Mahzīyār[277] (a companion of Imam Jawād), and Faḍl ibn Shadhān

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[271] Ṣadūq, Ibid, vol. 2, p. 377.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1393 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 51, p. 156.

[272] Ṭabarsī, 'Ilām al-Warā, Third Edition, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, p. 443-444.

[273] Ṭabarsī, Ibid, p. 443.

[274] Shaykh Ṭūsī, al-Fihrīst, Mashhad, Danishkadeye Ilāhīyāt wa Ma'ārife Islāmī, 1351 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 14, Number 19.
- Najjāshī, Fihrīst Asmā' Muṣanfī al-Shī'ah, Qum, Maktabah al-Dāwarī, p. 11.
- Ibn Dāwūd, Rijāl, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Rāḍī, p. 32, Number 23.

[275] Najjāshī, Ibid, p. 29.
- Ṭūsī, Fihrist, p. 98, Number 205.

[276] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 284, Number 617.

[277] Najjāshī, Ibid, p. 178.

Nayshābūrī[278] (a student of Imam Riḍā, Imam Jawād, and Imam Hādī).[279]

Imam Mahdī through Sunni Sources

As mentioned previously, the belief in the existence, disappearance, and subsequent reappearance of Imam Mahdī ('a) is not something particular to the Shia sect— it has deep roots in the Sunni sect as well. Famous Sunni narrators have narrated many traditions on the Mahdī ('a) from the companions and the Tabi'īn.[280] The books of the four schools (Ḥanafī, Shāfi'ī, Mālikī, and Ḥanbalī) are full of such traditions.

Based on the research of some of their great scholars, the narrators of the Ahl al-Sunnah have cited traditions on Imam Mahdī ('a) from 33 different individuals from among the companions of the Prophet.[281] In addition, 106 of the preeminent individuals from among their scholars have narrated traditions on the reappearance of Imam Mahdī ('a) in their books,[282] and 32 of these scholars have written independent texts on the subject of Imam Mahdī ('a).[283]

The Musnad of Aḥmad Ḥanbal (d. 241 Hijrī) and Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī (d. 256 Hijrī) are examples of such books. They were compiled by famous scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah before the birth of Imam Mahdī ('a), and they contain

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[278] Najjāshī, Ibid, p. 17.
- Ayatollah Ṣāfī, Muntakhab al-'Athar, Tehran, The Center For Book Publications, 1373 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 466 and 467.

[279] It should be mentioned that Ibrāhīm Anmāṭī and Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn Samā'ah were of the Wāqifī sect and their aim in writing such books was to prove their own views. In any case, this shows that belief in the Ghaybah was definitive and established. (Doctor Ḥusayn Jāsim, The Political History of the Ghaybah of the Twelfth Imam, translated by Doctor Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī Ayatollāhī, First Print, Tehran, Mu'assase Intishārāt Amīr Kabīr, 1367 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 21 and 22).

[280] The companions of the companions.

[281] Ṣāfī, Luṭfullāh, Navīde Amno Amān, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, p. 91 and 92.

[282] Ṣāfī, Ibid, p. 92-95.

[283] Ṣāfī, Ibid, p. 95-99.

numerous traditions on this matter.[284] From among the traditions narrated by Aḥmad Ḥanbal is one which states: "The Prophet of Islam (ṣ) said: 'If there is no more than one day left in the existence of the earth, then God will certainly select on that day, an individual from us, the family (meaning the family of the Prophet), and he will fill the earth with justice and equity, just as it had been filled with oppression.'"[285]

The prophetic traditions related to Imam Mahdī ('a) and his characteristics and signs are so numerous in the old books of the Ahl al-Sunnah that the scholars of tradition have considered the narrations related to Imam Mahdī ('a) as being 'Mutawātir' in their authenticity. Based on some cursory research, it appears that at least 17 of the famous Sunni scholars have considered the traditions on Imam Mahdī ('a) in their own books to be Mutawātir.[286] 'Allāmah Shawkānī has written a book proving the Tawātur nature of these traditions.[287]

It is also worth mentioning as an example some of the words of these notable Sunni scholars:

1- Shawkānī, after narrating traditions related to Imam Mahdī ('a), has stated: "All of the traditions which we have mentioned are considered Tawātur, and this is a fact not hidden to the experts... What has been mentioned in this regard should be sufficient to those with even the least amount of faith and fairness..."[288]

2- The Ḥāfiẓ[289] Abū 'Abdullah Ganjī Shāfi'ī (died 658 Hijrī

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[284] Refer to: Ṣaḥīḥ Būkhārī, First Edition, with commentary and research by Shaykh Qāsim Shammā'ī Rifā'ī, Beirut, Dār al-Qalam, 1407 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 4, Bāb 945, p. 633; Masnad Aḥmad Ḥanbal, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, vol. 1, p. 84, 99, and 448, and vol. 3, p. 27 and 37.

[285] Masnad Aḥmad Ḥanbal, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, vol. 1, p. 99.

[286] Ṣāfī, Ibid, p. 90-91.

[287] Ṣāfī, Ibid, p. 91.

[288] Narrated from Ghāyat al-Ma'mūl Fī Sharḥ al-Tāj al-Jāmi' Lil'uṣūl, compiled by Shaykh Manṣūr 'Alī Nāṣif, in the footnotes of al-Tāj, Second Edition, Cairo, Dār al-Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, vol. 5, p. 327.

[289] A 'Ḥafīẓ' is an individual who has gained proficiency in the traditions of the

Qamarī) has narrated in his book al-Bayān Fī 'Akhbār Ṣāḥib al-Zamān that: "The narrations relating to the Mahdī, due to the large number of narrators (Rāwī), has reached the status of Tawatur."[290]

3- The famous Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar ʿAsqalānī Shāfiʿī (d. 852 Hijrī Qamari) has mentioned in his book Fatḥ al-Bārī (a commentary on Ṣaḥīḥ Būkhārī) that: "Mutawātir traditions exist regarding the Mahdī, who is of this community (Ummah), and Jesus (ʿa), who will descend from the heavens and pray behind him."[291]

4- Mu'mīn Shablanjī has written: "Mutawātir traditions have reached us showing that the Mahdī (ʿa) is from this household, and that he will fill the earth with justice and equity."[292]

5- Shaykh Muḥammad Ṣabbān has written: "Mutawātir traditions have been narrated from the Prophet (ṣ) in regards to the Mahdī's revolt, and that he will be from the family of the Prophet, and that he will fill the earth with justice and equity..."[293]

6- Shaykh Manṣūr ʿAlī Nāṣif, one of the famous contemporary scholars of Al-Azhar Seminary, and the author of the book al-Tāj al-Jamiʿ Lil Ūṣūl,[294] has written: "Among past and present scholars, it is known with certainty, that at the end of time, a man by the name of Mahdī (ʿa), from the family of the Prophet, will appear. He will dominate over all the Islamic countries and the Muslims will become his followers; he will act with justice

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Prophet (s), and knows of the points of agreement and differences between various sources and reports. In addition, he knows the biographies of the narrators... (Mudīr Shānechī, Ibid, vol. 2, p. 22).

[290] Muntakhab al-'Athar, p. 5, footnotes.

[291] Fatḥ al-Bārī Bisharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Būkhārī, Beirut, Dār al-Maʿrifah, vol. 6, p. 493-494.

[292] Nūr al-Absār, Cairo, Maktabah Mashhad al-Ḥusaynī, p. 171.

[293] Asʿāf al-Rāghibīn, in the footnotes section of Nūr al-'Abṣār, p. 140.

[294] This book, as mentioned in its introduction, was compiled in order to gather all the authentic traditions from the 'Five Ṣaḥīḥs', which are five of the most important books of tradition of the Ahl al-Sunnah, into one collection. It has been published in five volumes. The author of this text has also written a commentary on the aforementioned text, by the name of Ghāyat al-Ma'mūl.

amongst them, and strengthen the religion. Then the Dajjāl shall appear. Jesus ('a) will descend from the heavens and kill the Dajjāl, or he will participate in the killing of the Dajjāl alongside the Mahdī ('a)."

Traditions about the Mahdī ('a) have also been narrated by a group of the companions of the Prophet. Famous narrators such as: Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah, Ṭabrānī, Abū Ya'lā, Bazzāz, Imam Aḥmad Ḥanbal, and Hākim Nayshābūrī have all narrated these traditions in their own books.[295] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, one of the well-known researchers of the Ahl al-Sunnah, has written the following on this subject: "All the Islamic sects ideologically agree that the life of this earth and the duty of human beings in obeying the divine rules and regulations will not come to an end until the rise of the Mahdī ('a)."[296]

The Statement of Rābiṭat al-'Ālim al-Islāmī

In addition to all this, there is also the official statement of Rābiṭat al-'Ālim al-'Islāmī, one of the most well-known institutions of the Wahhābī sect, located in the city of Mecca. One of the reasons behind the importance of this statement is that it shows how the most extreme group in opposition to the Shia, the Wahhābīs, also accept this belief. Not only have they accepted it, but they have also seriously defended it and consider it as being one of the established and definitive beliefs of Islam. In addition, this center is active on a worldwide scale.

In the year 1976, an individual by the name of Abū Muḥammad from Kenya, asked a question in regards to the appearance of the Mahdī ('a) from the Rābiṭat al-Ālim al-Islāmī organization. The reply ended up coming from the

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[295] Al-Tāj al-Jāmi' Lil Uṣūl, Cairo, Second Edition, Dār al-Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, vol. 5, p. 310.

[296] Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah, Cairo, Dār al-Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīa, 1960 A.D., vol. 10, p. 96.

head of the center, who mentioned that Ibn Taymīyah, the ideological founder of the Wahhābī sect, accepted the traditions in regards to the Mahdī (ʿa). He also sent the man a short treatise, which five of the famous scholars of the Ḥijāz had prepared. In the treatise, after mentioning the name of Imam Mahdī and the area of his appearance (Mecca), the following was written: "...When corruption appears in the world and disbelief and oppression spread, God will fill the earth with justice and equity through means of him (the Mahdī), much like it had been filled with oppression and tyranny.

He is the last of the twelve just rulers, whom the Prophet (ṣ) has given news of and who has been mentioned in the six authentic books. Many of the companions of the Prophet (ṣ) have narrated such traditions from him. These include individuals such as: ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (ʿa), Ṭalḥah ibn ʿUbaydullah, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAwf, ʿAbdullah ibn ʿAbbās, ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir, ʿAbdullah ibn Masʿūd, Abū Saʿīd Khudrī, Thawbān, Qurah ibn Āyās Mazanī, ʿAbdullah ibn Ḥārith, Abū Hurayrah, Hudhayfah ibn Yamān, Jābir ibn ʿAbdullah, Abū Amamah, Jābir ibn Mājid, ʿAbdullah ibn ʿUmar, Anas ibn Mālik, ʿUmrān ibn Ḥaṣīn, and Umm Salamah."

Then he adds: "There are many traditions narrated by the Prophet (ṣ), as well as the testimony of the companions, which hold the weight of traditions, and these are narrated in a great number of notable Islamic books and Islamic texts. These include Sunans like Abī Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah, Ibn ʿUmar al-Dānī; Masānīds like Aḥmad, Abī Yaʿlā, Bazzāz; Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥākim; Maʿājims like Ṭabrānī, Rawayānī, Dār al-Quṭnī, and Abū Naʿīm in the book Akhbār al-Mahdī; as well as historical works by Khatīb Baghdādī in his History of Baghdad, Ibn ʿAsākir in his History of Damasacus, and others."

Then he adds: "Some of the Islamic scholars have compiled independent texts on this subject. These include:

Abū Na'īm's book Akhbār al-Mahdī, Ibn Ḥajar Haytamī's Al-Qawl al-Mukhtasar Fī 'Alāmāt al-Mahdī al-Muntaẓar, Shawkānī's al-Tawḍīḥ Fī Tawātur Mā Jā Fī Muntaẓar Wa Dajjāl Wa al-Masīḥ, Idrīs 'Arāqī Maghribī's al-Mahdī, Abū al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Mu'mīn Maghribī's al-Wahm al-Maknūn Fī al-Radd 'Alā ibn Khaldūn. The last individual, who wrote a detailed discourse on this matter, is the head of the Islamic University of Medina, who published these articles in several volumes of the university's journal.[297]

A number of great Islamic scholars, past and present, have explained in their writings that the traditions on the Mahdī ('a) are Tawātur in authenticity and they cannot be rejected. Among such scholars are: Sakhāwī in his book Fatḥ al-Mughīth, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Safāwīnī in his Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah, Abū al-Ḥasan Abrī in his Manāqib al-Shāfi'ī, Ibn Taymīyah in his fatwas, Suyūṭī in his al-Ḥāwī, and so on..."

At the end of the statement, they have added: "It is only Ibn Khaldūn who has sought to criticize the traditions regarding the Mahdī ('a), through the use of fabricated and weak traditions. These traditions say that the Mahdī ('a) is no one other than Jesus ('a). Established Islamic scholars have refuted his words. Among these scholars is Ibn 'Abd al-Mu'mīn, who has written a book refuting him; this book was published about thirty years ago and can be found all over the world.

The narrators of tradition have classified the traditions about the Mahdī ('a) as being Ṣaḥīḥ or Ḥasan, and the entirety of the collection is undoubtedly Mutawātir, as well as Ṣaḥīḥ. Therefore, the belief in the appearance of the Mahdī ('a) is obligatory upon all Muslims, including the Ahl al-Sunnah; only a very small group of ignorant individuals have rejected this belief.

Thus says the head of the Islamic Fiqh Organization,

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[297] We will narrate some of the pages of this journal in the coming pages.

Muḥammad Muntaṣir Kanānī."[298]

Who is the Mahdī's Father?

It is necessary to mention here that in some of the Sunni sources, the father of the Mahdī ('a) has been introduced as being 'Abdullah.[299] This is in spite of the fact that there are numerous traditions, both in Shia and Sunni sources, which introduce the name of his father as being Ḥasan. The source of this difference is found in certain traditions of the Ahl al-Sunnah, where the Prophet (ṣ) is narrated as saying: "His name is (the same as) my name, and the name of his father, is the name of my father."[300] Historical evidence shows that the last part of this sentence, "the name of his father, is the name of my father," was added either on purpose or by accident by the narrator, whereas the Prophet (ṣ) only said: "His name is (the same as) my name."

Ḥāfiẓ Ganjī Shāfi'ī has said in this regard: "Tirmidhī[301] has narrated this tradition, but the last sentence is not a part of it."[302] In addition, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal has narrated this tradition in several places in his Masnad, but the last part of it is nowhere to be found.[303] Ganjī has further added: "In the majority of the traditions which the narrators of tradition of the Ahl al-Sunnah have narrated on this matter, the last part of the sentence does not appear. This section only appears in traditions that an individual by the name of Zā'idah narrated from 'Āṣim, and since Zā'idah added things to the traditions from himself, his

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[298] The full Arabic text of this statement can be found in the book: Mahdī, the Great Revolutionary, from page 151 to 155.

[299] These sources were used in the statement we previously discussed.

[300] Sunan Abī Dāwūd, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, vol. 4, p. 106, Kitāb al-Fitan wa al-Malāḥim, The Book of Mahdī (a), Ḥadīth 4282.
- Suyūṭī, Tārīkh al-Khūlafā, Baghdad, Maktabah al-Muthannā, p. 272.

[301] Muḥammad ibn 'Īsā ibn Sūrah' Tirmidhī died in the year 279 Hijrī; he is the author of one of the famous 'Six Books of Tradition' of the Ahl al-Sunnah.

[302] Sunan Tirmidhī, Beirut, Dār al-Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, vol. 4, p. 505, Bāb 52 (Mā Jā Fī al-Mahdī), Ḥadīth 2230 and 2231.

[303] Refer to: Masnad Aḥmad Ḥanbal, vol. 1, p. 448.

narrations have no credibility whatsoever."

Further evidence of this can be found in the fact that the narrator of this tradition is an individual by the name of ʿĀsim, and Ḥāfiẓ Abū Naʿīm, in his book Manāqib al-Mahdī, has narrated 31 narrators of this tradition, who all narrated through Zā'idah, and in none of these traditions is the last part of the sentence found. This section is only found in the narrations of Zā'idah, and naturally, when placed alongside these other traditions, is completely devoid of any credibility.[304]

Ibn Khaldūn[305] and the Traditions on the Mahdī

As we have seen, the majority of the Sunni scholars are of the same opinion that the traditions on the Mahdī (ʿa) are reliable and authentic. Still, a few individuals from this group have rejected or doubted the veracity of these traditions. Among these individuals is Ibn Khaldūn, who has said the following on this matter: "Among all the Muslims, past and present, it has been famously known that during the end of time, a man from the family of the Prophet will appear, establish the religion, and manifes justice and equity. The Muslims will follow him and he wi rule over all of the Muslim countries. This individual i named the Mahdī, and the appearance of the Dajjāl and other events are precursors to the Day of Judgment, which will follow his revolution. Jesus (ʿa) will also descend and kill the Dajjāl, or he will assist in the killing of the Dajjāl, and Jesus (ʿa) will pray behind him (the Mahdī)...

A group of the experts of tradition, such as: Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, Bazzāz, Ibn Mājah, Hākim, Ṭabrānī, and Abū

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[304] Ṣāfī, Muntakhab al-'Athar, Tehran, The Center For Book Publications, 1373 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 231-235.

- Mūsū'at al-'Imām al-Mahdī (a), Iṣfihān, Maktabah Imam Amīr al-Mu'minīn al-'Āmmah, vol. 1, p. 13-16. In this situation, there are other possibilities which we have not narrated for the sake of brevity.

[305] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad Ibn Khaldūn Maghribī. Born 732 Hijrī and died 808 Hijrī.

Ya'lā have quoted traditions regarding the Mahdī ('a) in their books. These traditions are narrated by companions such as: 'Alī ('a), Ibn 'Abbās, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Ṭalḥah, 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ūd, Abū Hurayrah, Anas, Abū Sa'īd Khudrī, Umm Ḥabībah, Umm Salamah, Thawbān, Qurrat ibn 'Iyās, 'Alī Hilālī, and 'Abdullah ibn Ḥārith. In spite of this, the rejecters of these traditions have disputed the veracity of their chains of narration. Ibn Khaldūn has then listed a number of traditions and researched their narrators, and has considered them as being unreliable and unauthentic. He has then added: "This is the collection of traditions narrated about the Mahdī and his rise at the end of time. None of these are reliable except a precious few."[306]

What we mentioned above was a brief summary of Ibn Khaldūn's opinion on the traditions on the Mahdī ('a). Expert scholars, from both the Shia and Sunni, have refuted his words with clear reasoning and logic, and have considered his position as one without foundation.[307] Here, we will narrate one of these refutations in the words of Shaykh Abū al-Muḥsin 'Ibād, the head of the Medina University. During a conference called 'Aqīdat Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Athar Fī Mahdī al-Muntaẓar, which aimed to refute the opinion of Ibn Khaldūn, he said the following: "A- If an individual, who is an expert in tradition, expressed doubt and skepticism about the traditions on the Mahdī ('a), then in that case his opinion would be worthwhile and the traditions would be suspect. On the other hand, if an individual who is not an expert claimed such a thing, then his opinion would, naturally, not hold much value. Shaykh Aḥmad Shākir has said the following in regards to Ibn Khaldūn's knowledge of traditions: 'Ibn Khaldūn has gone after something in which he possesses

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[306] Muqadamah, p. 322.

[307] Dād Gostare Jahān, p. 30-49.
- Mahdī Inqilābīye Buzurg, p. 159-165.
- Muntakhab al-'Athar, p. 5 and 6, Footnotes.

no knowledge thereof; he has entered a field where he is wholly unqualified. In the section that he has dedicated to the topic of the Mahdī ('a), he has expressed some strange doubts and skepticisms, and he has become entangled in certain manifest errors.'

B- In the beginning of the section about the Mahdī ('a), he has acknowledged: 'In both past and present times, it has been well-known among the Muslims that, at the end of time, a man from the family of the Prophet will appear...'

Ibn Khaldūn acknowledges that the whole of the Muslim nation, past as well as present, have believed in the revolution of the Mahdī ('a) and that it is a very well-known matter. If this is the case, then was it not proper for Ibn Khaldūn to also have accepted this matter like the rest of the Muslims? Isn't going against such an established belief, a form of stubborn and blind deviation? Is it possible that all of the Muslims have made a mistake and that only Ibn Khaldūn has grasped the truth in this matter?

At its essence, this is not a jurisprudential matter, but rather a narrated matter. Therefore, it is not correct for an individual to simply reject such a thing without solid proof from the Holy Quran and the traditions.

C- Before engaging in his criticism of these traditions, Ibn Khaldūn says the following: 'Now we will bring forward the traditions that have been narrated on this subject matter.'[308] After narrating these traditions, he says: 'This is the collection of narrations that the scholars of tradition have mentioned in regards to the Mahdī ('a) and his revolution at the end of time.' In another place, he mentions: 'We have listed here all of the traditions to the best of our abilities, which the narrators of tradition have mentioned in regards to the Mahdī ('a).'[309]

Although Ibn Khaldūn mentions this, he in fact leaves many traditions on the Mahdī ('a) unnarrated. This is

[308] p. 311.

[309] p. 327.

made very clear by referring to the book al-'Urf al-Wardī Fī 'Akhbār al-Mahdī, compiled by Suyūṭī. Similarly, he was inattentive in mentioning the traditions with authentic chains of narration in the book al-Manār al-Munīf, which was compiled by Ibn Qayyim.

D- Ibn Khaldūn has narrated a number of these traditions, and due to certain individuals in the chain of narrators, he has raised certain doubts. This is while both Būkhārī and Muslim, or at least one of them, has used these same individuals and narrated traditions from them in their own texts. In addition, other scholars have raised no issues with these individuals either.

E- Ibn Khaldūn has acknowledged that a small number of the traditions in regards to the Mahdī ('a) have perfect chains of narration, which cannot be doubted by any means. Therefore, this small number of traditions should be considered as solid proof of the matter, and the rest of the traditions should be considered as corroborators of that first group."[310]

Awaiting the Mahdī and the Issue of False Claimants

A look at Islamic history shows us that from the very beginning, certain position-seeking individuals have made claims to the position of the Mahdī, while in other cases, a group of the common people have come to believe that a certain individual was the promised Mahdī, without that person making any such claims. These things show that the matter of the Mahdī ('a), and the belief in a hidden savior, has been an established matter among the Muslims and one which has been accepted by all of them from the very beginning of Islam.

Since some of the false claimants possessed the name of

[310] The detailed words of Shaykh Abū al-Muḥsin 'Ibād can be found in the magazine al-Jāmi'ah' al-Islāmīya, Printed in Medina in Dhī al-Qaddah, in the year 1388 Hijrī Qamarī, Number 3, First Edition. We have narrated this from Mūsū'at al-Imām al-Mahdī, vol. 1.

Mahdī or other similar signs, they took advantage of these similarities and announced themselves as being the Mahdī. In some cases, these individuals did not lay claim to the position themselves, but other people, due to their ignorance or the severity of pressure and oppression that they faced from the ruling government, rushed to judgment and pronounced someone as being the Mahdī, without waiting to identify all of the necessary signs.

For example, a group of the Muslims mistakenly thought that Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafīyah was the Mahdī because his name and title were the same as the Prophet (ṣ). This group believed that he had not died and had instead gone into hiding, and would later reappear and rule over the world.[311] Similarly, a group from the Ismā'īlī sect believed that Ismā'īl, the son of Imam Ṣādiq ('a), had not actually died, but that his death had been announced due to divine expediency. They further believed that he was the 'Promised Qā'im,' and that he would revolt and rule over the world.[312]

An individual by the name of Muḥammad, better known as Nafsu Zakīyah, the son of 'Abdullah ibn Ḥasar revolted during the time of Manṣūr Dawānīqī. Due to hi name, his father made the claim that he was the promised Mahdī. By making this claim, his father gathered many supporters for his cause.[313] With the revolt of Nafsu Zakīya, Muḥammad ibn 'Ajalān, one of the jurisprudents and devout Muslims of Medina, joined him. When Muḥammad was defeated and killed, Ja'far ibn Sulaymān, the governor of Medina, summoned Ibn 'Ajalān and said to him: "Why did you revolt with that liar?" He then ordered that his hands be cut off as punishment.

The jurisprudents and nobles of Medina, who were

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[311] Nawbakhtī, Firaq al-Shī'ah, Najaf, al-Maṭba'at Haydarīya, 1355 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 27. - Shahrīstānī, Al-Milal wa al-Niḥal, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Rāḍī, vol. 1, p. 132.

[312] Nawbakhtī, Ibid, p. 67-68.

[313] Ibn Ṭaqṭaqā, al-Fakhrī, Beirut, Dār Sadir, 1386 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 165-166.

present, requested that Ja'far ibn Sulaymān pardon Ibn 'Ajalān. They said: "Oh leader, Muḥammad ibn Ajalan is a jurisprudent and a faithful man of Medina. This matter confused him and he thought that Muḥammad ibn 'Abdullah was the promised Mahdī that has been mentioned in the traditions."[314]

A similar situation also took place for 'Abdullah ibn Ja'far, one of the famous scholars and narrators of tradition in Medina. When he was summoned, he responded to the governor by saying: "I cooperated with Muḥammad ibn 'Abdullah because I had certainty that he was the promised Mahdī mentioned in our traditions. While he was alive, I had no doubt at all in this matter, but when he was killed, I realized that he was not the Mahdī, and after this, I will never be deceived by anyone ever again."[315]

In addition, Manṣūr, whose name was 'Abdullah, and the name of his son was Muḥammad, gave the title of Mahdī to his son and began to claim that his son was the promised Mahdī, and not Nafsu Zakīya.[316] Similarly, other sects believed that some of the previous Imams ('a) were the Mahdī. For example, the Nāwawasīyah believed that Imam Ṣādiq ('a) was the Mahdī, and that he was alive but hidden (even though many years had passed since his death).[317] The Wāqifīya sect had this belief in regards to Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far ('a).[318] In addition, they believed that he would not die until he had prevailed over both the East and West, and filled the earth with justice and equity, much like it had been filled with injustice and oppression.[319] There were other groups that came after the martyrdom of Imam

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[314] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Maqātil al-Ṭālibīīn, Najaf, al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 193.

[315] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Ibid, p. 195.

[316] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Ibid, p. 162.

[317] Shahrīstānī, Ibid, vol. 1, p. 148.

[318] Shahrīstānī, Ibid, p. 150.

[319] Nawbakhtī, Ibid, p. 80 and 83.

Ḥasan ʿAskarī (ʿa), who denied his death and said: "He is alive and hidden; he is the very same Qā'im Imam."[320]

These are all examples which show that the belief in the Mahdī (ʿa) was one which was long established from the time of the Prophet (ṣ) onwards. The Muslim community has always been awaiting an individual who would rise up and fight against oppression and injustice. He would then create a just government and raise his flag over the entire world. It is also clear that false claimants to this position cannot be the grounds for rejecting the essential validity of the concept. Throughout history, there has not been any shortage of false claimants to the rank of prophethood or other divinely inspired positions. In spite of this, no one can say that due to these false claimants, God does not exist or that he did not send any divine prophets!

The Government of the Mahdī in the Verses of the Quran

The Holy Quran has discussed the matter of the reappearance and revolution of Imam Mahdī (ʿa) without going into its specific details and particulars. It has also spoken of the complete victory of the pious and the formation of a just and global government. Commentators of the Quran, through the use of traditions and other Islamic sources, have attributed these verses to the Mahdī (ʿa) and to his reappearance and revolution. For the sake of brevity, let us look at three verses of the Quran that the scholars have identified with this subject, and which are the clearest in their relevance:[321]

1- "Before this, we wrote in the Psalms, after the message (given to Moses): My servants, the righteous, shall inherit the earth." [322]

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[320] Nawbakhtī, Ibid, p. 96.

[321] Ḥākīmī, Muḥammad Riḍā, Khurshide Maghrib, Tehran, Daftare Nashr Farhange Islāmī, 1360 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 140-151.

[322] Surah Anbīyā', Verse 105.

In the explanation of the meaning of this verse, it is worth mentioning that the word Dhikr essentially means anything which causes remembrance. Yet in this specific verse, it has been attributed to the divine book of Prophet Moses ('a), the Torah, and has the contextual meaning of being introduced before the Zabūr (Psalms).

According to another commentary, the word Dhikr is a reference to the Holy Quran, for the Quran itself, in another verse, has mentioned: "Verily this is no less than a message to (all) the worlds." [323] The meaning of the term 'Min Ba'd' here also takes on the meaning of 'in addition to'. Therefore, the verse takes on this meaning: We, in addition to the Quran, have written in the Zabūr that in the end, my pious servants shall inherit the earth.[324] The late Shaykh Mufīd, in the beginning of the chapter on Imam Mahdī ('a), has referenced this verse, as well as the verse which follows it.[325] In the commentary on this verse from Imam Bāqir ('a), it has been narrated that he said: "The pious servants mentioned here are the companions of the Mahdī ('a) at the end of time."[326]

The late Ṭabarsī, the prominent commentator of the Quran, after narrating the above mentioned tradition, has said: "The traditions which the Shia and the Sunni have narrated from the Prophet (ṣ) have the following meaning: 'If only one day is left from the existence of the earth, God will make that day of such duration, until he appoints a pious man from my descendants, and he will fill the earth with justice and equity, just as it had been filled with oppression and inequity.'"[327] The Quran's foretelling of the just government of the worthy servants of God on this

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[323] Surah Takwīr, Verse 27

[324] Ayatollah Makārim, Nāṣir, Mahdī Inqilabiye Buzurg, Second Print, Qum, Maṭbū'ātī Hadaf, p. 121-122.

[325] Al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 346.

[326] Ṭabarsī, Majma' al-Bayān, Tehran, Shirkat al-Ma'ārif al-Islāmīya, 1379 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 7, p. 66.

[327] Ṭabarsī, Ibid, p. 67.

earth in the books of the Torah and Injīl (New Testament), show that this issue is of such importance that it has also been mentioned in the divine books of previous successive prophets.

Another interesting point is that this matter has also been mentioned in the Psalms of David, which is today a part of the Old Testament. This book is said to contain a collection of the supplications of Prophet David ('a). For example, in Psalms 37, we find the following: "...For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." Likewise, in the same Psalms, we read: "...The blessed shall inherit the earth, but the cursed shall be uprooted."[328]

2- "And we desired to show favor to those who were abased in the land, and to make them imams, and to make them the heirs." [329]

As mentioned in a previous section, Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a) is seen foretelling the turning of the people towards the family of the Prophet while reciting this verse.[330]

In another historical incident, Muḥammad ibn Ja'far, who was one of the Alawīs, revolted against the 'Abbāsid government during the time of Ma'mūn. He has mentioned: "One day, I spoke to Mālik ibn Anas in regards to the difficulties and pressures that we were facing. He said: 'Be patient until the meaning of the verse: (And we desired to show favor to those...) becomes manifest.'"[331]

3- "Allah has promised to those among you who believe and

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[328] The Tawrāh (Torah), translated to Farsi by William Kilen Qisīs Iksī through the British Fine Bible Society, London Print, 1856 A.D., p. 1030.

[329] Surah Qaṣaṣ, Verse 6.

[330] Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, vol. 19, p. 29, Wisdom 205.

[331] Abū al-Faraj, Ibid, p. 359.

work righteous deeds, that He will of a surety, grant them in the land inheritance (of power), as He granted it to those before them; that He will establish in authority their religion - the one which He has chosen for them; and that He will change (their state), after the fear in which they (lived), to one of security and peace: 'They will worship Me (alone) and not associate aught with Me...'"

The late Ṭabarsī has said in regards to the commentary on this verse: It has been narrated from the family of the Prophet that this verse has been revealed about the Mahdī ('a) from the family of Muḥammad. 'Ayyāshī has narrated from Imam 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ('a) that he read this verse and said: "I swear by God that they are our Shias... God will enact this by their right, through the hands of a man who is from us, and he is the Mahdī ('a) of this community (Ummah). He is the same individual whom the Prophet (ṣ) has said the following in regards to: 'If there is only one day left in the life of this earth, God will make that day long enough in duration, so that a man from my family can become the ruler of the world. His name is (the same as) my name (Muḥammad); he will fill the earth with justice and equity, just as it had been filled with oppression and inequity.' Ṭabarsī has further added: 'This same meaning has also been narrated by Imam Bāqir ('a) and Imam Ṣādiq ('a).'"[332]

The Purpose behind the Imam's Existence during the Era of the Ghaybah

Now that our discussion on Imam Mahdī ('a) has reached this junction, it would be appropriate that we answer one of the most common questions that is asked in regards to him. The question is: What is the purpose and benefit behind the existence of the Imam ('a) during the period of the Ghaybah? The life of the Imam ('a) in the era

[332] Majma' al-Bayān, vol. 7, p. 152.

of the Ghaybah is a private life and not a social life as a recognizable, physically present leader. Therefore, what sort of a social effect does the life of such an individual have on the society, and how do the people benefit from his existence?

Here, we must pay attention to the fact that the Imam's Ghaybah does not mean that he is completely invisible and cut off from the society. On the contrary, he lives a very natural life, albeit with a very long lifespan. The Imam ('a) lives amongst the people and has an effect on the society; he simply goes about his life as an unrecognized individual. There is a great deal of difference between being unrecognized and of having no effect in a society.[333] Imam Ṣādiq ('a) has said: "The people will lose their Imam ('a). He will be present in the Ḥajj pilgrimage and he will see the people, but they will not see him."[334]

The Hidden Sun

In regards to the question that was asked, it must be mentioned that this is not a new question, nor is it one which has only been asked during modern times. Through Islamic traditions, we see that this question was asked from even before the birth of Imam Mahdī ('a). Whenever the Prophet of Islam (ṣ) or the Imams spoke of the Mahdī and his long Ghaybah from the people, the people would ask them such questions and they would answer them. For example:

1- The Prophet (ṣ) gave the following answer in response to a question of whether the Shia, during the time of the Ghaybah, would benefit from the existence of the Imam ('a): "Yes, I swear by the Lord who appointed me to the position of prophethood, that they (the people) will benefit from him during his period of Ghaybah and will profit

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[333] Ayatollah Makārim, Nāṣir, Mahdī Inqilabīye Buzurg, Second Print, Qum, Maṭbū'ātī Hadaf, p. 250.

[334] Kulaynī, Ūṣūl al-Kāfī, Tehran, Maktabah al-Ṣadūq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 338.

from the light of his 'Wīlāyah' (guardianship), in the same way that they benefit from the sun when it is hidden behind the clouds."[335]

2- Imam Ṣādiq ('a) has said: "From the day that God created Adam ('a) until the Day of Judgment, the earth was never and will never be devoid of the Ḥujjah (the proof); be he manifest, or concealed. [So know], that were it not for his Ḥujjah, God would not be worshiped."

The narrator asked: "How will the people benefit from their hidden Imam?" The Imam ('a) said: "In the same way that they benefit from the sun when it is hidden behind the clouds."[336]

3- Imam Mahdī ('a) has also personally emphasized this point. In a Tawqī'[337] that he issued in response to the questions of Isḥāq ibn Ya'qūb, and which was given to Isḥāq through Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān, he wrote the following: "The benefit of the people from me is like their benefit from the sun, when it becomes hidden behind the clouds."[338]

In the explanation of this comparison, we must keep in mind that the sun gives us two forms of light: The first is a direct and manifest form of light, and the second is an indirect form of light. In the first form of light giving, the rays of the sun are clearly visible and manifest, while in the second form, the clouds act as a sort of opaque filter and diffuse the rays of the sun. In both of these types of light giving, the rays of the sun play an integral role in all forms of life on this earth; indeed it can be said that life itself depends on the sun, whether in its direct or indirect form.

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[335] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1393 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 52, p. 93 and vol. 36, p. 250.

[336] Majlisī, Ibid, p. 92.

[337] A letter which includes instructions and guidance.

[338] Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, p. 177.

- Majlisī, Ibid, p. 92.

- 'Irbilī, 'Alī ibn 'Īsā, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 322.

The spiritual rays caused by the existence of the Imam ('a), whether directly visible or indirect, have powerful effects on human society. At this juncture, let us take a deeper look at this issue:

1- The Existence of This World

According to numerous traditions on the matter of the imamate, and based on reasons presented by the scholars, the Islamic worldview presents the Imam ('a) as being, in essence, the life of this world, and that the very existence of this world has a dependence on him. The Imam ('a) is seen as the focal point in the existence of the world, and a connection between this world and the Creator. From this perspective, the Imam's ('a) concealment or manifestation does not make a difference in relation to his status and position. In line with this worldview, if the Imam ('a) was not present in this world, then the very state of existence would collapse. Imam Ṣādiq ('a) is quoted as having said: "If the earth remains without the presence of an Imam, it will consume its inhabitants."[339]

The Fourth Imam ('a) has said: "It is under the auspices of our existence that God prevents the sky from coming down, except with his permission. It is under the auspices of our existence that God prevents the earth from shaking and taking away the peace of its inhabitants. It is through our medium that God sends down the rain and spreads his mercy and brings out the blessings of the earth. And if an individual from amongst us was not present on this earth, the earth would consume its inhabitants."[340]

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[339] Kulaynī, Ibid, vol. 1, p. 179. Also refer to: Ṣadūq, Kamālidīn, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī Lijamā'at al-Mudarisīn, 1405 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 201-210.

[340] Ṣadūq, Āmāli, Qum, Maṭba'at al-Ḥikmah, p. 112.
- Majlisī, p. 35.
- Ṣadūq, Kamālidīn, p. 207, Bāb 21, Ḥadīth 22.

۲- Guarding the Religion of God

Amīr al-Mu'minin ('a), during the course of one of his sermons on the necessity of the existence of divine leaders during all periods of time, mentioned the following: "God is such that he will never allow the earth to remain empty of one who will rise with proof and reasoning, be he manifest and visible or hidden and fearful, in order that the clear divine reasons and evidence will not be lost and forgotten..."[341]

It is clear that, with the passing of time and the mixing of personal opinions and ideas into religious issues, as well as the expansion of the power of the corrupt, the very fabric of any divine religion will gradually be transformed for the worst, and in time, be utterly destroyed. In order for the original nature of the divine religion to be protected, and in order that it be safeguarded from various distortions, alterations, and superstitions, there is a very clear need for an infallible divine leader to watch over and guide the people. For example, we find that in any important organization, there is always a fireproof safe present, in order to protect all the essential documents of that organization from various dangers, such as fire or theft. The heart and spirit of the Imam ('a) act in a similar manner, and it functions as a fireproof safe for the essential realities of Islam. Through his existence, the religion is able to grow in a safe and guided manner and is safeguarded from distortion and alteration.[342]

Ibn Ḥajar 'Asqalānī, in his commentary on Ṣaḥīḥ Būkhārī, has narrated a tradition which speaks of Prophet Jesus ('a) descending to the earth during the time of the reappearance of Imam Mahdī ('a) and how he will follow

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[341] Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Cairo, Dār al-Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1960 A.D., vol. 18, Wisdom 143, p. 347.
- Al-Manāqib, Akhtab Khawārizmī, Najaf, al-Maṭba'at al-Ḥaydarīa, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 264.

[342] Ayatollah Makārim, Nāṣir, Mahdī Inqilabiye Buzurg, Second Print, Qum, Maṭbū'ātī Hadaf, p. 257-259.

the Imam ('a). He has written: "Prophet Jesus ('a), during the end of time and near the Day of Resurrection, will follow a man from this community (ummah) and he will pray behind him. This is evidence of the validity of the perspective held by Islamic thinkers, which is that the earth will never remain empty of the existence of a Ḥujjah, who, through clear reasoning and proof, will revolt for the sake of God."[343]

3- Hope

In the field of battle, the flag of one's army is a potent psychological symbol and it gives great strength for soldiers to see their flag flying high. Similarly, the opposing side understands that if they can capture the flag, they have dealt a potent blow to their enemies. In the same way, the existence of the commander of an army in his center of command gives morale to his soldiers, regardless of if they can see him directly or not. What is important to them is the fact that they know that he is there. His existence causes the soldiers to fight longer and harder towards victory.

On the other hand, if news of the death of the commander spreads throughout the army, then that one mighty and invincible army will suddenly lose its fighting spirit. The head of an army (or of any organization, for that matter) is the cause for the order, calmness, and action of his organization, while news of his death causes the complete reversal of this situation. The Shia, in accordance with their beliefs about their living Imam ('a), do not see themselves as being alone; the psychological effects of this belief in keeping alive the light of hope in the people's hearts, and of pushing people towards self preparation for the great world revolution is very clear and easy to understand.[344]

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[343] Fatḥ al-Bārī Bisharḥi Ṣaḥīḥ Būkhārī, Beirut, Dār al-Ma'rifah, vol. 6, p. 494.

[344] Ayatollah Makārim, Ibid, p. 255 and 256.

Professor Henry Corbin, the teacher of philosophy in the Sorbonne University of France has mentioned the following: "In my opinion, the Shia sect is the only sect that has retained the connection of divine guidance between God and his creation for all of time; they have retained this connection in a lasting and established fashion. Judaism has taken prophethood, which is a connection between God and human beings, and ended it with the Prophet Moses. They have not acknowledged the prophethood of Jesus or Muḥammad and therefore cut off the aforementioned connection. Similarly, the Christians have stopped with Jesus. From amongst the Muslims, the Sunnis have also stopped with Muḥammad (ṣ), and by stopping at his prophethood, they have not considered the potential of any existing link between the Creator and the creation. It is only the Shia sect which considers prophethood as ending with Muḥammad (ṣ), but the issue of 'Guardianship,' which is that ever-guiding and perfecting connection, as continuing after the Prophet (ṣ) and existing for all of time."